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Hidden Saints . .

S. HARVEY GEM, M.A.



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HIDDEN SAINTS

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*A STUDY OF THE
BROTHERS OF THE COMMON LIFE*

BY

S. HARVEY GEM, M.A.

LIBRARIAN OF THE OXFORD DIOCESAN CHURCH HISTORY SOCIETY;
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"Learn how many times greater is the virtue that is tested by action, than
that which depends only on thought and imagination."

THOMAS A KEMPIS.

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE object of this little book is to offer to the general reader some particulars about the Brothers of the Common Life under whom Thomas à Kempis received his religious training in boyhood; to describe their aims and work, and their extension through Holland and Germany; to place at the disposal of the student some of the results of the recent investigations made by foreign scholars, and to bring before him many passages from the original authors who were either Brothers themselves or contemporaries with them. Church-people in England have lately paid more attention than formerly to the ecclesiastical history of their own country, and have shown themselves interested in the annals of the Early Christian Church under the Roman Empire; but too little attention has as yet been given to the eventful periods of the Middle Ages, or to the dawn of the Reformation abroad. Hence the Brothers of the Common Life who accomplished so much quiet work in the by-paths of history in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, may well be called "Hidden Saints." Nor did they desire fame; for their motto, drawn from St. Bernard and adopted by à Kempis, was "Love to be unknown" (Ama

nesciri); and until the works of the Rev. S. Kettlewell and Sir F. Cruise appeared they were almost entirely hidden persons to English readers. Little enough are they studied even now, and the writer of these pages has endeavoured by quotation and translation from early records of the Brotherhood to carry the reader back into their lives and their labours. The reason of these quotations and translations has been the belief that only by such means can a history of the distant past be made to live before us again in thought. The writer may here venture to state his reason for this opinion. Many years ago he acquired his first real interest in Church history from meeting with that old-fashioned book *Joseph Milner's History of the Church*. What fascinated him about the work of Milner was the number of well-chosen and numerous quotations from the original authorities. These carried the reader back into the age which they described, giving a vivid picture of scenes which in a summary of history would remain quite colourless.¹ Learning from this experience the writer has thought well to make frequent quotations from the early writings of the Brothers, and he has translated in an abbreviated form the contemporary annals that were published and printed in a later century by Dumbard at Amsterdam. They relate to the original Brotherhood at Deventer, and may be regarded as supplementary to the still more valuable memoirs written

¹ For the same reason the work of Tillemont remains an authority to this day. A similar instance is afforded by *Gieseler's Eccl. History: English translation by Davidson* (Edinburgh, T. T. Clark); which is crowded with passages from the original documents. And see note at the end of this preface.

by à Kempis. These latter, lately translated in an attractive English style by Mr. J. P. Arthur, have by his kind permission been frequently quoted in the following pages, especially as regards the lives of the founders, Gerard Groot and Florentius. A few quotations have also been added from the *Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes*, and from the devotional treatise by Brother Gerard of Zutphen, also translated by the same hand. For these advantages the author's thanks are cordially given.

Grateful acknowledgments of valuable help are also offered to the Rev. I. Gregory Smith, LL.D. ; to Mr. Falconer Madan, M.A., of the Bodleian Library and Lecturer in Mediæval Palæography ; to Mr. C. F. Vincent, M.A., of New College, late Sub-warden of Radley ; and to Mr. P. C. Allen, M.A., of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, Editor of the *Letters of Erasmus*. To the foreign authors and editors mentioned under "Literature" the writer is largely indebted for the information given in these pages.

The importance of readers of history being offered some access to original sources has been, since the above preface was written, referred to by Mr. James Bryce at a meeting presided over by the present Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, which was held at University College, Gower Street.

"Mr. Bryce said the study of history had not been developed along systematic lines, and though the need for further and better organization and development of that study was still great, the present position was incomparably better than it was half-a-century ago, when the teaching of

history was such that it would not be thought now to be worthy of the name. Nothing was more remarkable in the new line which historical study and teaching had taken in the last thirty years than the disposition to send students to original sources, to the contemporary authors, instead of allowing them to learn from those who wrote long after the happening of events. In that way one learnt not only facts, but, what was much more important, how to study. It was not easy to apply this method to modern history, because modern or mediæval authors did not compare with ancient authors. Yet there were mediæval and modern writers who might be studied in the same way."

It is hoped that the many references contained in these pages to original authorities may not prove wearisome to the general reader; they have been inserted with a view of assisting the student to make a thorough investigation of the subject for himself.

S. H. G.

LITERATURE

Original Sources.—The most readily available of these are the lives of Gerard, Florentius and others by Thomas à Kempis, in the editions by Sommalius, in the seventeenth century, of the works of à Kempis. Earlier editions: *Opera et libri vite*, Nuremberg, Gaspar Hochfeder, 1494 (folio); and *à Kempis opera*, Antwerp, 1574. Also *Chronicon canonicorum regularium Montis S. Agneti*, Thomas à Kempis; and *Chronicon Windeshemense*, J. Buschius, Antwerp, 1621.

The *Chronicle of Windesheim* has been re-edited by Karl Grube, with the *Liber de reformatione monasteriorum*, Halle, 1886; and is an indispensable source for the study of Gerard Groot and the Brothers and monks influenced by him. Of the Brothers' Lives by à Kempis a translation has, for the first time, been made in English by J. P. Arthur, *The Founders of the New Devotion*, Kegan Paul, 1905. The same writer has also brought out a translation of the *Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes*, Kegan Paul, 1906; and is about to publish a translation of Gerald Zerbolt's *Beatus vir* and *Homo quidam*.

Other sources are given by Schulze in the 3rd edition of Herzog's *Real Encyclopädie*, Vol. III, Leipzig, 1897; such as MS. by Petrus Hoorn in the Burgundian Library; Nos. 8849-59. Lives of Gerard Groot, Brinckerinck, Everard of Eza, Henry Goude, Egbert ter Beck, John of Hatten, containing information about the earliest Brother-houses. This MS. belonged to the house at Deventer. A MS. book that belonged to the Sister-house at Deventer, the title being, *ein buxken, hoert den susteren van meyster geryts huys toe*, and now in the provincial archives of Friesland at Deventer, containing the lives of Gerard, Florentius and others. In the library at the Hague, MS. No. 350, a book of the privileges and customs of the House of Florentius at Deventer. By Rudolph Dier de Mudén, lives of Gerard, Florentius and others, printed in Dumbars' *Analecta*, Deventer, 1719-22, containing letters of Florentius and others at the time of the plague. The first volume of the *Analecta* contains also a continuation of *Dier de Mudén*, by Peter Hoorn; the *Life of P. Hoorn*, by Lubeck;

and the *Life of Egbert ter Beck*, and of *John Hatten*, also *Registrum Bonorum Domus Domini Florentii, ab ipsis fratribus emptorum*. For a list of original sources not given here the student should refer to Schulze's article mentioned above.

Modern Literature.—Delprat : *Verhandeling over de Broederschap van G. Groote en over ten invloed der Fraterhuizen*, Utrecht, 1830; a revised edition being published at Arnheim by Delprat, 1856. The epoch-making work on Windesheim by Acquoy : *Het Klooster te Windesheim en zijn invloed*, 1875-80. Hirsche : *Kritisch-exegetische-Einleitung in die Werke des Thomas von Kempen*, Berlin, 1873 onwards. The three editions of Herzog's *Real Encyclopädie für Protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, containing a vast amount of information on the Brothers of the Common Life and several articles on Gerard, Florentius and other members. In each edition the article on the Brothers is by a different author; in the first by Ullman, in the second by Hirsche, in the third by Schulze. In these, the article by Hirsche goes the deepest, Schulze treating chiefly of the outward development. 1st ed., Stuttgart, 1853-66; 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1877 (Herzog and Plitt); 3rd ed., Leipzig, 1896, etc. (Hauck).

Vide also Groot und seine Stiftungen K. Grube, Köln, 1883. For further literature *vide* Schulze in Herzog, Vol. III. One of the most valuable treatises on the characteristics and work of the Brotherhood is that by E. Möbius, Leipzig, 1887; being an exercise written for the Doctorate.

Bonet Maury : *Gerard de Groote*, Paris, 1878; contains a useful list of Gerardic writings and extracts from them. Kettlewell : *Thomas à Kempis and the Brothers of the Common Life*, 2nd ed., abridged, Kegan Paul, 1885, will be found useful but does not contain the more recent criticism and information. An interesting sketch of the Brothers of the Common Life is contained in ch. ii of Dr. Neale's *History of the Jansenist Church of Holland*, Parker, 1858.

See also *Thomas à Kempis; a Visit to the Scenes in which his Life was spent*, by Sir Francis Cruise, M.D., Dublin, which contains a very valuable list of the bibliography and literature of the whole subject (Kegan Paul, 1887). *Thomas à Kempis; His Age and Book*, by De Montmorency (Methuen), with photographs from MSS., 1907. *Selections from the German Mystics*, by the Rev. Dr. Inge (Methuen, 1904). *The Imitation of Christ; called also the Ecclesiastical Music*, with Notes by the Rev. Dr. Bigg (Methuen). *Studies in Education during the Age of the Renaissance*, by Professor Woodward, of the University of Liverpool (Camb. Univ. Press, 1906).

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HIDDEN SAINTS

INTRODUCTION

THE Associations called the Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods of the Common Life represent one among many efforts made in the Middle Ages to recur to the ideals of primitive and evangelic self-devotion. We might indeed have supposed that the progress of Christianity would have been a path unbroken by dark shadows, and shining from first to last with unchequered light "unto the perfect day." But a very slight acquaintance with history is enough to show us that this was not the case. Neither our Lord nor His apostles led us to anticipate that it would be. And if any one charges with comparative failure the Church which Christ founded on earth, the answer is that He Himself knew what was in man, and it was His own prophecy that the "love of many should wax cold." His divine religion was to work upon imperfect material; from age to age it has to contend with the evil that lies deep in the heart of man. There were times recurring again and again when men fell away from the truth and led, even beneath the outward shadow of the Cross, lives of carelessness and worldliness and vice. There were times when the Church seemed dead, and her lamp

had nearly gone out. But Christ, though He foresaw all this, had promised to her the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit; consequently the Christian religion contained within itself the secret of its own renewal in the world. Age after age men fell away from their high vocation, but age after age the still small voice of the Spirit breathed again into the hearts of some here and there, and they prophesied, and the dead bones arose and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Most of us are accustomed to the thought that it was so at the Reformation. But there were many other revivals before, and they were largely due to the successive orders of monks which arose from time to time, and which were themselves renewals of the work of St. Benedict. It was the monks who kept alive in their cells the lamp of light, and who, at least in their early days, bore it in mission work into the world to guide the steps of men. And when worldliness and self-indulgence crept in, new orders of monks arose, and if the history of monasticism was a history of decadence, it was also a history of revival. Even the friars, at first the most earnest of mission preachers, fell away, and in the period with which we are concerned they had for the most part become a by-word and a reproach. There had also been efforts, less directly connected with the discipline of the Catholic Church, at the attainment of spiritual life, such as those of the Beghards and Béguines and the "Friends of God."

Such interest as has been felt by English readers in the Brothers of the Common Life has arisen from their connection with Thomas à Kempis. The

Imitatio Christi, usually accepted as his work, has long been known to our educated Church-people.¹ The silence of the author as to his personality tends to excite curiosity as to his history. In the century that has recently passed away, more has been effected than before to introduce English readers to an acquaintance with the Brothers of the Common Life. The writer of these pages has before him a Latin edition of the *Imitatio*, published in the year 1827 by Messrs. Pickering. An introduction to it, extending over sixteen pages, is signed by the editor of this edition, "Charles Butler, Lincoln's Inn." It contains an outline of the life of à Kempis, and a notice of the Brothers of the Common Life, under whom he was trained in religion while attending the church school of Deventer. A few experts among the students of Great Britain have long known that the works of à Kempis were collected and edited by Sommalius in the seventeenth century. These include the lives of the early Brothers of the Common Life and of their founders as written by à Kempis; but not his Chronicle of his monastery, which exists in a separate form. A study of the lives, and other sources of information, enabled the Rev. S. Kettlewell to introduce to the notice of general readers the teachers and the companions of à Kempis in a most interesting book—which attained a second edition in a somewhat abridged form in 1885. Dr., now Sir Francis,

¹ The arguments of Hirsche appear quite conclusive as to the authorship of à Kempis. Busch, his contemporary, the chronicler of *Windesheim*, says, "frater Thomas de Kempis, vir probatæ vitæ, qui plures devotos tractatulos composuit; videlicet, 'Qui sequitur me,' de imitatione Christi, cum aliis." (Ed. Grube, p. 58.)

Cruise of Dublin followed the subject up, from the Roman point of view, in a masterly work, published in 1887, giving the reader a list of valuable sources of information, both ancient and modern.¹

The labours of these writers have combined to lift the curtain which has so long hidden à Kempis and the Societies of the Common Life from the gaze of all except a few professed students. It is to be hoped that English readers having been led to an interest in the Brothers from their relation to à Kempis will go on to realize that they too have a history that is well worthy of study. The works of Kettlewell and Cruise should excite the wish to pursue the subject to a later period than that of which they treat. It is the aim of the following pages to attempt to satisfy this wish. Yet the writer is well aware that it will be some time before the final word can be said as to the history of the Brothers. In making his way to such of the original sources as have been open to him, and in the perusal of the remarkable writings of foreign researchers he has endeavoured to offer to the reader an outline of the subject, and to illustrate it with many particulars that should be of interest. At the same time he is aware that his treatment in these few pages cannot pretend to be exhaustive; nor indeed would it be possible at present for the author of a larger volume to say the last word as to the history and work of the Brothers. For there is still

¹ *Thomas à Kempis and the Brothers of the Common Life*, by the Rev. S. Kettlewell, M.A. (Kegan Paul, 1885); 2nd ed., abridged.

Thomas à Kempis; Notes of a Visit to the Scenes in which his life was spent, F. R. Cruise, M.D. (Kegan Paul, 1887).

some amount of matter lying in unedited MSS. in the libraries of Holland and Belgium. These records will doubtless be published as time permits by the thorough-going students of Holland and Germany, to whom our present materials are already due ; so that in any case a complete presentment of this interesting portion of church history must be awaited from future years.

There are in the meantime certain main lines which are quite clear, and they shall be indicated in these opening pages. What was the connection of Thomas à Kempis with the Brothers of the Common Life ? He was never one of them, a fact sometimes overlooked ; but he was educated at the school of Deventer under Boheme, where Florentius and his Brotherhood supervised the religious education of the boys whom they received into their house or boarded out among devout citizens. From intercourse with the revered Florentius and his Brothers of the Common Life Thomas deepened the religion that he had brought with him from his father and mother ; and from his admiration of the unworldly life led in the Brother-house of Deventer he became an apt scholar in the ancient lore of Catholic spirituality, lighted up as it was before his eyes by the new fire of the "moderna devotio." This appellation was given to the revival originated by Gerard Groot and followed up by Florentius. To us it must seem a strange name, now that five hundred years have ceased to allow it to be "modern." And it was always a misleading name, for except in the one point of seeking to throw open Holy Scripture widely to the laity it had nothing in common with the great

Reformation. It did not aim in the least degree at new aspects of doctrine such as Luther regarded as more in harmony with the teaching of St. Paul and the early Church. It was simply an effort to re-animate the laity and clergy with spiritual vitality drawn from the ancient teachings of the Latin Fathers, such as St. Augustine and St. Bernard, and from the Holy Scriptures, as then understood.

With the revival of spiritual religion in view, Gerard Groot and Florentius made it their object to divide the "*moderna devotio*" into two branches: the Brothers of the Common Life, who were to help to reform the world round their homes, and to educate boys in religion—this was the one branch; the other was the founding of several monasteries of the Augustinian order, of which the purpose was the restoration of piety among the degenerate monks. Both these lines of effort were animated by one spirit, that of the "*devotio*." A Kempis represents this one spirit in both its forms; for he owed his religious training to the Brothers, and he carried that training into the life of one of the pattern monasteries to which the movement had given rise. This one spirit in both its aspects breathes in his writings, and these are the permanent legacy of the "*moderna devotio*" to the Church. It has sometimes been asked why it is that the Brothers of the Common Life did not exercise a more enduring influence on the Church in general. The answer is that they simply tried to do the work that was nearest to them, in the care of the poor and sick, and in the religious training of youth. But besides a few writings of theirs that remain, the great legacy

of the "moderna devotio" to future ages of the Church were the works of à Kempis, into these there flowed most fully and permanently the one spirit of their revived piety. Hence it is that students such as Hirsche have been able to point to the similarity of tone and of language which unite the *Imitatio* with the *Lives* of the Brothers, and the other devotional treatises, of which he is the undoubted author.¹ As to these writings the epoch-making volumes of Hirsche leave little more to be desired. Translations of various parts of them have long ago appeared from time to time in our language, but the two books of à Kempis that had not been translated were the very two that bore most closely on the history of the "devotio"; namely the *Lives* of the founders and followers of the new devotion, eleven in number, and the *Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes*, the monastery to which à Kempis belonged. These have now been rendered into English by Mr. J. P. Arthur (Kegan Paul). The Chronicle of the earliest monastery of the "devotio" (founded a short time before that of St. Agnes), namely the monastery of Windesheim, has not yet been translated, but has been edited by Grube in Germany. A monk belonging to Windesheim, named Busch, has recorded in it many particulars that illustrate the labours both of the Brothers and the monks, and has noticed therein the lives and the thoughts of several of them, who pre-eminently represented the mysticism that had long before, and partly through Tauler

¹ Grube points out that there is a striking likeness between the sayings of Groot and passages of the *Imitatio* (*Groot und Seine Stiftungen Köln*, 1883).

and Ruysbroeck, found its way into the Catholic Church.

As Thomas à Kempis may justly be regarded as embodying the spirit of the "*moderna devotio*," the question naturally arises in connection with what has been said in this chapter, whether à Kempis is to be regarded as a mystic? Some writers have described him as a mystic, others as a semi-mystic. The answer depends upon what we mean by the words "mystic" and "mysticism," for they are often used in very different senses. A very able Oxonian, a contemporary of Jowett, Master of Balliol, was asked what he thought of Jowett's religious position. He replied, "he was a mystic." By this he meant that he was a man who made light of doctrinal definitions, and desired in his inner being to rest directly on God. Yet a passage occurs in Jowett's writings in which he speaks slightly of mystics. It is obvious that the word bore a very different meaning when used in these two cases. We must look back to the origin of the expression, whence such divergent meanings have arisen. The word "mystic" is derived from the Greek mysteries, which signified the admission after repentance and purgation into divine secrets. In Christian life this derived signification may be taken to mean the admission of the soul by the Holy Spirit into a personal realization of truths, as contrasted with a mere external acknowledgment of them. And the highest of these truths in the sense of mysticism is the union of the soul with God in Christ effected by the progressive influence of the Holy Ghost. These truths are "open secrets," they are offered to all, and therefore open, yet at the same

time they are secrets. "Dost thou know the secret of the Lord?" "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." In this sense every Christian who has realized the vital truths of his religion is becoming a mystic. Canon Moberly, in his *Atonement and Personality*, has words to the effect that if all Christians were real Christians there would be no mystics in any further sense (v. p. 315). But this is not a complete account of the matter. The word "mystic" is used also with special meanings, and sometimes it signifies those who have risen, or think they have risen, into such communion with God as to be guided by the "inner light" and no longer bound by the definitions of traditional theology. Of these Eckhart is an example, and in some degree Ruysbroeck. If we understand mysticism only in the sense that Canon Moberly desires it to bear, then we may call à Kempis a mystic; but if in the latter sense then he was a semi-mystic. He would not follow Eckhart into philosophic speculations which the Roman authorities held to be objectionable. Like Gerard Groot he would draw the line firmly whenever the limit had been marked by the Church Catholic. Anyhow his mysticism was founded on the Scriptures, and inspired by the spiritual teaching of St. Augustine and St. Bernard. And it was only with these limitations that the Brothers of the Common Life can be regarded as having a part in mysticism.

An instance from St. Augustine in illustration of spiritual mysticism in the *Imitatio* may be sufficient.

From St. Augustine's teaching, or if we like to call

it so, his mysticism, the well-known passage may be chosen for comparison with the *Imitatio*.

"Lord, Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is unrestful till it find rest in Thee."

In the twenty-first chapter of the fourth book of à Kempis we read—

"Above all things and in all things, O my soul, thou shalt rest in the Lord alway, for He Himself is the everlasting Rest of His Saints. Grant me, O most sweet and loving Jesus, to rest in Thee above all creatures, above all health and beauty, above all glory and honour, above all power and dignity . . . above all things visible and invisible, and above all that Thou art not, O my God. . . . And I said, Lord, I have called Thee, and have desired to enjoy Thee, being ready to refuse all things for Thy sake. For Thou first hast stirred me up that I might seek Thee. Blessed be Thou, therefore, O Lord, that Thou hast showed this goodness to Thy servant, according to the multitude of Thy mercies."

There are many expressions drawn from Augustine and Bernard in the *Imitatio* besides those which savour of mysticism; as for instance the one that may be regarded as pre-eminently the motto of the Brothers, "*Ama nesciri*," which occurs in Bk. II, ch. ii, and in the *Alphabet of a Monk*, by à Kempis, where "*Ama nesciri*" forms the opening sentence and is drawn from St. Bernard, thus affording also one among many instances of the identity of aims between the Brothers and their Augustinian Canons Regular.

It has been asked whether the Brothers, so far as they were mystics, had an influence unconsciously to

themselves which favoured the subsequent Reformation. The reply seems to be, only so far as vital and inward spirituality of itself tended in the direction of overthrowing the domination of the priesthood and liberating men from excessive use of forms. A great deal of the religion of the day had become mechanical. With many the life did not matter much. You could easily get absolved ; recourse to a priest would soon set matters right. This of course was not the real teaching of even the mediæval Church ; but in practice it prevailed widely, and was fostered by the system of indulgences, pilgrimages, and veneration of relics, as well as by the love of power over others shown by the degenerate clergy. Hence it was that the right of every soul to draw near to God for itself without the intervention of any other human being became the very essence of the Reformation. Mysticism certainly tended in the direction of this independence, but Luther appears not to have favoured mysticism, while asserting loudly the independence of the soul, so that the two movements had rather an inward than an outward connection.

Mr. de Montmorency in his recent work on the *Imitatio* has brought forward many passages from it which contravene the criticism of Dean Milman, that it is "devoid of the idea of self-sacrifice for the good of others, that it begins in self and ends in self." Those passages are quite enough to disprove the hasty generalization of the eloquent dean ; but we may add that if Dean Milman had known and read the *Lives* of the Brothers by à Kempis he would quickly have perceived how erroneous his estimate had been. In the *Lives* à Kempis is constantly

commending to a listening novice the example of unselfish devotion to work for others, especially for the poor and needy, shown by his own revered Superior Florentius at Deventer, by John Ketel, and the rest of those whom he commemorates in his pages. In Florentius we find not only the actions of love carried out, but the principle laid down in the clearest manner, for he speaks in one of his tractates of union with God, and of union with our neighbour. And it was he who formed the character of Thomas. It is much to be hoped that a wider acquaintance with the *Lives* will henceforth render such charges impossible.¹

There is therefore abundant evidence that the service of others, often called altruism in the present day, held a prominent place in the life of the Brothers and in the mind and writings of à Kempis. Yet there is a grain of truth in the charge of Canon Farrar that the *Imitatio* discountenances sociability. There are certainly passages which bear in this direction. The "moderna devotio" was based on the idea of making everything spiritual. When Gerard entertained citizens at his table, he considered that the frugal, and to them unpalatable dinner could be made up for by the reading of some holy book or by edifying discourse. So later on it is recorded of some of the Brothers that when they dined out with some of the burghers they used to reward their hosts

¹ No one could doubt the importance attached by à Kempis to the service of others in their necessities who has read his tractate on *De fideli Dispensatore*, in which the ideal Martha's motives and duties are set forth. *Opera Thomæ à Kempis* (Sommalius). Appendix C.

for the entertainment by pointing out to them the defects of their characters. All this was zealous, but it was not what is generally regarded as sociability, and, except with the devout among the citizens, would have repelled the claims of religion rather than advanced them. It has been well remarked that the narrowness thus observable in the *Imitatio* may be counteracted by the study of St. Francis de Sales. Modern society had begun in the time of the latter, and his *Devout Life* and many of his spiritual letters were directed to persons who had to live in the world. It is well therefore for readers of the present time to supplement their study of the *Imitatio* by familiarity with these writings. If however we regard the unsociability of old days as antiquated, it may be well to bear in mind that the genuine Evangelical of our own early days was only happy in the society of the converted, and the "saved" seldom associated willingly with those who were still "lost," except for the laudable purpose of rescuing their souls. Now, the danger is all the other way; one hears the lamentation that the Church has mingled with the world, that religious people catch the spirit of the world, that they have not forsaken its pomps and vanities, and that they pass from bowing themselves in the house of Rimmon to kneel at the Altars of Jesus Christ. If this be so, some touch of the aloofness of these holy Brothers might well be laid upon our hearts.

Such an attitude towards general society was closely connected with the sweeping condemnation of earthly enjoyment summed up in the phrase "contempt of the world." Its honours, ambitions,

and dignities, even its higher degrees at the university, were all eschewed by the votaries of the "moderna devotio." This was right enough for them, and shows the truly Christian spirit of the Brothers and their monks; but it could not be a part of the life of all; many men in other spheres, however pious, would have to submit to the dangers and temptations of high office, or government could not have been carried on, whether in Church or State. And some at least have borne within them amid the disadvantages of high position the simple heart of a little child. In the desire to recruit the monasteries with more worthy novices, as a youth or a Brother passed into these, the contempt of the world was really needed. (For we know too well that the monks had fallen back into the very worldliness which it was their profession to forsake.) They shut the world out at their front door, but it soon entered in at the back; history shows us that the gift of large property by admiring or superstitious laymen had led the monks into the charge of those very earthly affairs which it had been their earlier object to renounce; and indeed that they frequently became involved in unholy strife for money with the townspeople that lived near their sacred shrines. The Carthusians, and some of the Augustinians, such as those who gathered round Ruysbroeck, had escaped the contagion; but so widely had it spread that a large part of the efforts of the model society of Windesheim were directed to restoring among the regulars the former "contemptus mundi." Yet we may hope that these monks and Brothers, while turning aside from the "fashion that passeth away,"

were not without enjoyment of the beautiful world that God had made. As the monks of Windesheim or St. Agnes planted their orchards or reaped their fields, those fair pictures of spiritual things must have harmonized with their meditations, and given them rest from indoor labours; and in their solitudes far from the crowded and unhealthy town, they would realize that heaven and God were nearer to their souls. To the monk, however, another form of danger, another evil demon was near. He was above all men sworn to humility, yet the membership of an ancient and often illustrious order became an occasion of pride. Even the Franciscans, or Friars Minor (who professed to be the humblest of the humble), are recorded, so history tells us, to have applied on some ecclesiastical occasion, for precedence over the Dominicans, on the ground of their greater humility. And the common people, as well as the authorities of the Church, felt a reverence for the ancient and professed orders. There was much need therefore of the effort of the "devotio" to recall the true spirit of holiness. And the Brothers at least were favourably placed for its attainment. Their Society was fortified by no ancient prestige, they were a new institution and, as they took no vows, they were not regulars. For this they were attacked by prominent churchmen, and despised by many of the populace, as nondescript amateurs in piety. The reproaches of the people were heaped upon them under the contemptuous name of Lollards, though without the slightest ground of justice. But their modest position became to them a help in the maintenance of humility. And when we remember, as holy writers

have taught us, that a lowly estimate of ourselves, maintained throughout life, is the absolutely necessary condition of the continued inflow of the Grace of God into the soul, we shall see that the absence of the monastic temptation to pride was a great advantage to the Brothers of the Common Life. Lowliness was moreover cherished by humiliating surroundings. They wore, after the example of Gerard their founder, the oldest and shabbiest cassocks that they could find, and would have them pieced till they could be mended no longer. They would often sit on the floor for a meal, or stand all the while, and their scanty food contrasted painfully with the good cheer of many an ancient abbey. They would vie with each other which should undertake the most menial tasks. In the terrible hours of the frequently recurring plague they would watch by the sick members of the house, and perform unflinchingly the most loathsome tasks of nursing in the wards: often catching the infection, they would without a murmur prepare for a too early dissolution, and calmly accept the call to suffer and die, enduring "as seeing Him Who is invisible."

It was doubtless easier to go, as they had few ties to earth, and yet we cannot but regret that their views were imperfect about the sacredness of home and family life. They shared, though not bound by any vow, the exaggerated value for celibacy, which prevailed among all the religious of the Middle Ages. Nor was there so much excuse for this as might appear at first sight. Notwithstanding the turmoil and ravages that prevailed among great personages and their retainers, there was evidently a good

amount of peaceful devotion in the quiet homes that were shielded by their obscurity. In the Rhineland Tauler and the "Friends of God" had sowed many seeds of true spiritual life. Thomas à Kempis himself received his first impressions of religion from a pious father and mother. He was much attached to his brother John the prior, and left his own monastery to attend on him for some months in his last illness. It is remarkable that not a few pious widows were helpful to the Brothers and to the boys under their charge, and several of the most valued of the Brothers and rectors of the house, or procurators, are stated in the records edited by Dumbarton to have had pious mothers who spoke to them of God in their infancy, and encouraged them, at the sacrifice of their maternal feelings, to enter the Brotherhoods or the monasteries. One is therefore all the more shocked to hear from John Vos that the sisters known to him, who had joined a convent, went so far as to regard the vocation of motherhood with contempt.¹ We must excuse them on the ground that their mistaken estimate of the merit of celibacy was, as has just been said, widely prevalent among the serious-minded, and a conspicuous instance may be given from our own Church history. Dean Colet, the contemporary of Erasmus, and in a great degree sharing his liberal views, and acting on them also, yet had so strong a feeling against marriage that he did not think it would be any loss if the whole human race died out for lack of it.²

¹ See page 134.

² Lupton, *Life of Dean Colet*, pp. 78 and 79.

Yet in spite of these overstrained views and with all their earnest efforts the old Adam could not be so easily shut out from the Brother-houses. If almost entirely absent in the earlier days he returned at the time in which the records collected by Dumbarton relate in most honest and simple language both the nobleness and littleness that chequered their life. We read of jealousy on the part of the laymen as regards the clerics of the Society at Deventer, and of some noisy disputes among the younger monks at Windesheim. It seems sad to have to mention such defects among men who were so earnest, and whose societies accomplished so great a work for the poor and for education; but too roseate a view would be misleading. It is better to try and represent things exactly as they were; the great consolation is thereby available that to begin with these good devotees were men of like passions with ourselves, and that it took some of them a long time to put on the new man and to rise to the saintliness which was the object of their constantly renewed exertions. For their leading thought was the overcoming of their faults which they called "vices" and the acquiring the contrary virtues, and so they strove to rise to the love of God and of mankind around them. The merits of the Passion of Christ were to them the means of forgiveness, and the constant going over in meditation His humble and sorrowful life and suffering was their inspiration. They were to follow Him outwardly in poverty and the renunciation of any earthly possessions, and inwardly in seeking that the Holy Spirit should develop in them the various graces on which His beatitudes had been pronounced, and which

shone so perfectly in His own example. They forsook all and followed Him ; and taking up their cross they bore it onwards till the last hours of their lives.

It has just been remarked, and will become more obvious in the following pages, that the Brothers of the Common Life objected to all kinds of honours. It is said that the monks of the "moderna devotio" at Windesheim obtained exemption from the obligation of sending any of their members to study at the universities. Gerard Groot and his early followers held, in common with not a few holy men of their age, that even philosophical and theological inquiries were dangerous. This view is stated with the utmost clearness and force in the opening pages of the *Imitatio*—

"Cease from an inordinate desire of knowing, for therein is much distraction and deceit."

"What availeth it to cavil and dispute much about dark and hidden things ; whereas for being ignorant of them we shall not be so much as reproved at the day of judgment?"

"O if men bestowed as much labour in the rooting out of vices and planting of virtues as they do in mooted questions, neither would there so much hurt be done, nor so great scandal be given to the world, nor so much looseness practised in religious houses!"

"How many perish by reason of vain learning in this world, who take little care of the serving of God!"

"Throw aside subtleties, read thoroughly such books as rather stir compunction than furnish occupation."

"What have we to do with genera and species?" "quid nobis de generibus et speciebus?"

These last words are evidently aimed by à Kempis

at the scholastic philosophy which Gerard had regarded as so barren of good result. Its dialectics had at one time been a valuable exercise of the mind, but they had now degenerated into quibbles. Neither Gerard nor à Kempis could see much good in the man who with a great reputation for learning showed no practical results in his life and character. Doubtless a further risk appeared to be that studies merely intellectual might lead to heresy. An interesting sentence is to be found in the early records of the Brothers describing monastic decadence as following upon clerical intellectualism (Dumbar, *Analecta*, Vol. I, p. 134), "Primo devoti, secundo scientifici, et tertio dissoluti."¹

Since those days the fields of theological study have been enormously enlarged and widened; yet it may be worth while to glance for a moment at the question whether in these somewhat narrow views there may yet be some warning of value for ourselves? To shut our eyes to all that may now be studied would be a very unworthy course, but on the other hand it is true still that spiritual things are "spiritually discerned." It is rather by devotional reading than by critical study that we enter into the solution of religious difficulties. By devotional reading we touch religion at its higher end; by critical study we touch it at its lower end. To some extent therefore there is still a warning in the line of thought of the Brothers, and it is a line of thought remarkably in harmony with the words of one very differently circumstanced from them in an age nearer our own.

¹ See page 154.

A Prayer of Dr. Johnson

"O Lord, my Maker and Protector, Who hast graciously sent me into this world to work out my salvation, enable me to drive from me all such unquiet and perplexing thoughts as may mislead or hinder me in the practice of those duties which Thou hast required. When I behold the works of Thy hands, and consider the course of Thy Providence, give me Grace always to remember that Thy thoughts are not my thoughts, nor Thy ways my ways. And while it shall please Thee to continue me in this world where much is to be done, and little to be known, teach me by Thy Holy Spirit to withdraw my mind from unprofitable and dangerous inquiries, difficulties vainly curious, and doubts impossible to be solved. Let me rejoice in the light which Thou hast imparted, let me serve Thee with active zeal and humble confidence, and wait with patient expectation for the time in which the soul which Thou receivest shall be satisfied with knowledge. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen." (*Johnsonian Miscellanies*, Birkbeck Hill, Vol. I, p. 118.)

It seems a far cry from the Brothers of the Common Life to Dr. Johnson. But in the *Johnsonian Misc.*, Vol. I, p. 36, we find among several of his short resolutions one which is indicated by the name of "Bonaventura"; Boswell's note thereon runs as follows—

"He was probably proposing to himself the model of this excellent person, who for his piety was called the Seraphic Doctor."

Bonaventura was born in 1221, died in 1274, so that the spiritual aspirations of Dr. Johnson went even further back than the time of the Brothers.

Before concluding these introductory words reference may be made to the manual labour of the Society.

In regard to these activities the Brothers worked as a duty, indoors and out-of-doors; and the monks of their model monasteries revived in full force the vigorous outdoor labour which early monasticism had always practised and which Benedict had required as an essential portion of his rule. Doubtless in the degenerated monasteries which owned large estates the work of the fields had been left to servants. The friars became noted for idleness and begging, but St. Francis had not intended this to be so; on the contrary, he bade his followers to work and labour, and he evidently intended that when they asked for food it was to be on their preaching journeys, in accordance with the precepts of the Gospel. It was jealousy that led them to attack the Brothers, for fulfilling a duty which they themselves found it pleasanter to neglect. Hence there was nothing novel or peculiar in the Brothers working. It was the revival of an ancient obligation. On this point an interesting quotation may be placed before the reader from Brother Gerard of Zutphen, who writes as follows in his *Spiritual Ascensions*—

Thou must often choose, as thou makest thine ascent, some bodily or manual labour; nay verily thou must so order thine exercises that thou train thyself every day and at set times in manual toil, and also at their own set times

make progress in the upgoings of thine heart, although perhaps thou shalt not be hindered from making this progress even whilst thou dost labour with thine hands. For thou canst pray, meditate and exercise thyself in fear and desire whilst thou art at labour: our holy fathers had this for their rule, for they did trust that the more faithfully they gave themselves to labouring with their hands, so much the greater would be their progress in attaining the heights of purity, charity and spiritual perfection. Wherefore, O man, seeing that thou art frail, think not thyself an angel (for these have a spiritual food which thou knowest not), so as to desire continually to cleave to the things of the spirit, but at set times exercise thyself with the labour of thine hands, and this for a multitude of reasons.

"In the first place lest thou utterly give up all spiritual exercises, being overcome of weariness, for think not thyself to be more fervent and spiritual than the great Saint Anthony who would have returned to the world, being so anguished, save that he learned from an angel so to ascend and descend in this wise, dividing his time between bodily and spiritual work. Moreover the opinion of Cassianus is this, that he who is not content to do some manual labour every day cannot persevere to the end in the cell.

"The second reason is this: that although to some small degree such toil may withdraw thee from leisure for contemplation yet will it make thee more able for it afterward, for as thou hast heard a man cannot make the ascent while his lusts are yet with him, but these are the very things that hinder his upgoing. Wherefore it doth behove thee to overcome these lusts, and especially by manual toil, because every idle man is tempted of desire. Thus manual labour doth subserve the spiritual ascent in proportion as it doth remove the obstacles thereto.

"In the third place thine heart is very unstable, and as a little boat is tossed hither and thither in the waves of the

sea, so is the heart shaken by divers affections and thoughts. Therefore as saith Cassianus, 'It doth beseem thee to make fast thine heart, as with an anchor, that is by the weight or occupation of manual toil.'

"Fourthly, because the enemy findeth more doors whereby to let in temptation when we are idle than when we are busied ; and verily as men say, 'He that is busy is tempted by one fiend only, but an idler is harried by fiends innumerable.'"

CHAPTER I

LIFE OF GERARD GROOT

IN the *Lives* by à Kempis we have the earliest stage of the development of the Society described before it fully attained its subsequent organization and extension. But, in the opinion of a most capable critic (Hirsche, *Prolegomena*, Berlin, 1883, Vol. II, p. 518 etc.)—

“The information given in the *Lives* by à Kempis of Groot and his companions is of the highest historical value; they are original sources, the particulars mentioned in them being in part the experiences of Thomas à Kempis himself, partly information derived from the most trustworthy witnesses. Some of these biographies acquire a special value from having writings attached to them which were the composition of the men whose lives Thomas is describing.”

Hirsche goes on to argue that numerous parallelisms of expression are found in the *Lives* with the *Imitatio*, and are a convincing proof that à Kempis wrote that book, and he asserts that this is particularly the case where sayings of Groot and Florentius are reported; he gives a long list of examples (in the notes of p. 523,

etc.). It is certain that the spirit infused by Gerard and Florentius into their Brotherhoods has much in common with the teaching of the *Imitatio*.

In some respects the arrangements of the Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods of the Common Life were similar to those of the Béguines and Beghards, who maintained their Houses by the labour of their hands, and devoted themselves to prayer and works of mercy without permanent vows; but these had, in some cases, fallen under the suspicion of heresy and irregularity, and it appears to have been with a view of avoiding such dangers that the founders of the "Modern Devotion" established monasteries for the oversight of their societies.

The movement called the "Modern Devotion" was set on foot by Gerard Groot (1340-1384) and his disciple Florentius Radewin (1350-1400). It resulted in the establishment of the Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods, without vows, of the "Common Life," and of monasteries of regulars in connection with them. The object in view was the revival of piety and morals, in strict connection with the faith of the mediæval Church. The movement represented no mere outward reform, but the inner spirit of vital religion. It aimed at the conversion and renewal of the heart by the Holy Spirit; it repeated, though not with entire clearness, the message of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ; it proclaimed the importance of the study of Holy Scripture. These truths had never ceased to exist in the mediæval Church, but they had been sadly buried and hidden away under too numerous ceremonies, and were little realized by ordinary worshippers, who needed to be brought back

to the meaning that lay beneath, and led to enter into the personal religion of a renewed heart.

"The times," says Kettlewell, "in which the Brothers of the Common Life arose, were sad, and often tragical. There were many dark places in the land, full of cruel habitations, one power warring with another, and the petty princes making constant inroads and preying upon the people, who had to defend themselves as best they could, and often suffered great loss both of life and property. The dissensions and disorders that prevailed in the Church herself, lowered her moral standard, rent her asunder, weakened her influence for good, made her too often but an instrument of swelling the torrent of evil that swept over the nations of Christendom."

In combating the evils of the day, Gerard Groot desired to recruit the degenerated monasteries with better novices; to supply more earnest young men to the priesthood, and to influence for good the people at large. How he attempted this will appear from a short sketch of his life and of that of Florentius.

GERARD

GERARD was the son of Werner Groot, a wealthy citizen and magistrate of Deventer.¹ The name Groot means "great" (it is variously spelt: Gerrit, Geert, Groete, Groet, Groote, or Groot), and when the bearer of it became famous he was called Gerard the Great. He was sent early in youth to the University of Paris, then the chief seat of education in Northern Europe,

¹ The name of the learned Grotius (1583-1645) was also Groot.

and such was his progress and the favour shown to him, that he was allowed to take the degree of Master of Arts at the age of eighteen.¹ "But," says Thomas à Kempis, "his object in studying was not the glory of Christ, but, pursuing the shadow of a great name,"² he cared chiefly for human applause": (*Vita Ger.*, ch. ii) "magni nominis umbram sequens."

Among his teachers at the University of Paris were John Buridanus, a scholar of Occam, and Nicolas Oresmus. He studied not only the usual scholastic theologians, but medicine, astronomy, and canon law. He also read some books on magic, but he asserts that he never attempted to practise it.

Groot is said to have paid a visit to the Papal court at Avignon in 1366, and it has been conjectured that this was on business relating to his native town.

¹ With regard to the degree of M.A., we find that "in the course of the fourteenth century the minimum period for the M.A. degree was reduced to five years and (after 1366) to four years and a half; yet even before this date we find the Book of the Chancellor of St. Genevieve requiring only three years' study at Paris, with the reservation that the Faculty interpreted the three years as two complete years and part of a third. It is, however, possible that this applied only to those who had kept some residence at another University." At the same time, "the case of each student who supplicated for this or that step was more or less considered on its own merits, and neither statutes nor oaths could prevent a great deal of 'dispensation.'" (Rashdall, *Universities of Europe*, Vol. I, p. 454.)

In his preface to his edition of the *Chron. of Windesheim*, Grube states that he has been informed by Denifle that Gerard's name occurs in a Rotulus of Regent Masters of the University of Paris for the year 1363. This would not seem to agree with the statement of à Kempis.

² *Imitatio*, "Non sit tibi curae de magni nominis umbra."—"Be not careful for the shadow of a great name," Bk. III, ch. xxiv. Dr. Bigg quotes St. Bernard, from whom à Kempis doubtless derived the expression, "Non est in eo, (Jesu) magni nominis umbra sed veritas."

His connection with the University of Paris had brought him within the range of ecclesiastical privileges, but these, as was often the case, were unduly stretched when he was made a canon of Utrecht and Aix-la-Chapelle. Instead of qualifying himself for such considerable responsibilities, he settled at Cologne, then a seat of learning and fashion.¹ Young, wealthy, highly educated and elegantly dressed, he soon became popular. But one day while enjoying himself as a spectator at some public sports, there came up to him a stranger of serious aspect and exclaimed: "Why standest thou here intent upon vain things, another man thou oughtest to become?" The warning was unheeded at the time, but a further leading followed. Illness came, so often the divinely-appointed retreat of the soul, when isolated from the world it hears the heavenly voices call. Gerard was seized with a grievous malady and lay at the point of death. When the priest came to receive his last confession, he required Gerard to burn all his manuscripts relating to magic and astrology. He refused, the priest left him, but alarmed at the increase of his sickness he sent for him again and consented. (Thomas à Kempis, *Vita Ger.*, ch. xiii, 5.) But there came yet another voice before Gerard broke openly with the world. An old college friend of his named Kalkar, now prior of the Carthusian monastery of Monichuysen, had invited his monks to join in prayer

¹ There had long been a "Studium" of importance at Cologne; Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus had lectured there. Probably Gerard Groot both studied and lectured, but he died four years before a University was formally established, the Municipality obtaining a Bull from Pope Urban VI in 1388 for that purpose.

for the conversion of Gerard. Coming to visit him at Utrecht

"He approached Gerard as his familiar friend, greeted him as his old comrade . . . spoke to him as to a man of learning of 'The Sovereign Good'; he laid before him the rewards of Eternity, and the terrors of the judgment to come, with mingled kindness and severity; he praised the Religious Life, and denounced the ways of the world, showing that everything beneath the sun shall perish. . . . 'But oh! how great are the gifts promised to those that follow Christ'!" (Thomas à Kempis, *Vita Ger.*, ch. iv, 2.)

These conversations were frequently repeated, and Gerard eventually came to a firm resolution to change his life, and by the favour of God to renounce the pomps of the world. Disregarding the surprise and ridicule of his former associates Gerard now set to work in earnest upon his soul. He retired from his usual mode of life for five years, and spent three years in the Carthusian monastery of Monichuysen in exercises of self-discipline. At length the good monks there exhorted him to use the great gift for preaching which they found that he possessed, and to go forth as an evangelist. They said

"he would be of profit to more souls by openly preaching the Word of life, by so doing he would bring the greatest gain to Christ and lead many with him to the eternal Kingdom." (Thomas à Kempis, *Vita Ger.*, ch. viii, 1.)

Gerard was ordained deacon in the year 1380, and was thus enabled to preach under the permission of the Bishop, but he would never take priest's orders, regarding the higher dignity of the priesthood as far

above him. The time of his fruit-bearing had now arrived ; from his former learning, his great abilities, his late retirement for prayer and study of the Scriptures, combined with the examination and discipline of his own soul, he came forth as an evangelizing preacher of great power and efficiency. The people, seldom unready to respond to one who has a real message, gathered in crowds to hear him, wherever he went. Even their business and their food were left in their hunger after the lessons of righteousness. He often preached two sermons in one day, and sometimes continued in the eagerness of his spirit to speak for three hours at a time. He preached in the chief cities of the diocese of Utrecht, such as Deventer and Zwolle ; in Utrecht he addressed the assembled clergy, and he delivered sermons in Holland, at Leyden, Delft, Ghent, and Amsterdam, as well as in other towns and villages. To those of his hearers who showed signs of a true conversion Gerard gladly became a spiritual adviser, and he was ready to make any effort that might contribute to their perseverance and growth in the faith. So à Kempis remarks that

“The Venerable Master Gerard perceiving that little by little the number of his disciples was increasing, and that they were burning with zeal for the heavenly warfare, took due care and forethought that the devout might come together from time to time into one house for mutual exhortation, and that they might deal faithfully with one another as to the things pertaining to God, and to the keeping of the law of charity ; and he ordained that if any should wish to abide continually together, they should earn their own living by the labour of their hands, and as far as

might be, live in common under the discipline of the Church. . . . He had it in mind to build a monastery for clerks of the order of Regular Canons, for he wished to move some of those clerks who followed him and were fitted for such a life to take the Religious habit, in order that they might serve as an example to other devout persons, and show the way of holiness to any clerks or laymen that came from elsewhere." (Thomas à Kempis, *Vita Ger.*, ch. xv.)

✓ For these monks he was led to choose the
X Augustinian order, chiefly out of reverence for the
venerable John Ruysbroeck, prior of Grünthal, to
whom he paid several visits.

Another reason for Gerard's choice of the Augustinian order is alleged to have been that members of his societies of devout Brothers and Sisters would more easily obtain access to the monks for advice and help than if he had adopted an order that was more secluded, such as the Carthusian. It is also stated that one of Gerard's objects in seeking to found some monasteries was to afford protection to his Brothers, who being without vows and maintaining themselves by labour, and living in common, were likely to be attacked by the friars and other rivals, as proved afterwards to be the case. The commencement of these Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods was made with a view of gathering in the fruits of his labours. But the opposition offered by the friars and some of the clergy to his sermons, in which he lashed their vices, led to their procuring an inhibition of his preaching. Though the most orthodox of men, for he was called "malleus hereticorum," the hammer of heretics, he was even accused of

heresy. The people would have supported him in disregarding the inhibition of his Bishop, but he was too loyal to resist authority. A friend of his wrote to the Bishop on his behalf without result. To the Pope, Urban VI, a letter was also addressed by an eminent person, Gulielmus de Salvarvilla, Precentor at Paris and Archdeacon of Liège, asking that a licence to preach might be granted to Master Gerard. Both these letters are to be found in the *Memoirs* by à Kempis. It appears probable that the permission was given, but soon after Gerard died, 1384. The duration of his wonderful preaching was only three and a half years.

As a first step to establishing Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods we notice that, after presenting a large portion of his inherited wealth to the monastery of Grünthal, he gave a house of his own as a refuge for widows and maidens at Deventer, in which they were to reside, working with their hands and praying with their hearts. His next step was to gather about him youths whom he employed in copying holy books, and whom he paid by instalments, so that coming to him frequently they might often be urged by him to a life of piety. Many of these were eventually settled in a house where they lived in common on the proceeds of their work, but without permanent vows, such as the monks took. Busch states that this suggestion came from Gerard's disciple, Florentius (ed. Grube, p. 25, etc.). But recent critics have invalidated the accuracy of this statement, and regard the project as that of Gerard. It is certain that Gerard himself was called away before he could fully develop the organization of his

societies. Visiting a friend, who had given money by his will for a monastery that Gerard desired to build, Lambert Steurman, who was affected with the plague, he caught the infection, and as he felt the pulse of the sick man, he perceived that the poison passed into his own hand. Steurman recovered, but Gerard sank and died at the age of forty-four. In his last words to his disciples he commended Florentius to them as their future leader.

Besides his account of Gerard Groot in the *Lives*, à Kempis refers to Gerard's death in the *Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes*, as follows:—

“In the same year was the much loved Master Gerard, the light and the brightness of piety in the diocese of Utrecht, taken from the world to receive the reward of his great deeds, and went up from our vale of tears to the Mount of Eternal Beatitude.” (Appendix No. 3.)

✓ Gerard had a clear perception of what the age really wanted. He was learned, but the power of his personality did not consist so much in extensive knowledge, or philosophic depth, as in the clearness with which he saw what men chiefly needed. Consequently he passed by a mass of fruitless and unprofitable learning with which the scholars of the day burdened themselves and others, and kept on directing attention to all that was simple, healthful, and conducive to holy living. The principle he took up was that all that does not make us better men is injurious (*vide* Ullmann, *Reformatoren*, Vol. II). We may apply to him the words used of our own George Herbert, that “though he knew the ways of learning, he declined them for the service of his Master, Jesus.”

The *Memoirs* of both Gerard and Florentius are followed by some reflections and good resolutions on spiritual things. Those of Gerard are chiefly notes, written with great brevity in mediæval Latin, and in some parts the meaning is consequently obscure. Reality in religion is his leading thought. The following instances may be given. A careful avoidance of any personal honour or distinction is strictly required.

"I resolve," he says, "not to study any art, nor to write any book, nor to undertake any journey, nor any labour, nor to pursue any science, with the purpose of extending mine own fame and repute for knowledge, or of gaining honour or the gratitude of any man or for the sake of leaving a memorial of myself behind me. Let the extending of my repute be in every way avoided."

"Before all things and in all things study especially to be humble inwardly, and also outwardly before the Brethren."

"Think how thou mayest be altogether conqueror of thyself, and lift up thy heart ever to God, as saith the prophet, 'Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord.'"

"The knowledge of all knowledge is for a man to know that he knoweth nothing."

"Thou oughtest always to strive to note some good in another and to think thereof."

"Always dwell more upon the hope of eternal glory than upon fear of hell." (Contrast with this the remark of John de Pomerio, under "Mysticism of the Brothers.")

Only a few sermons of Groot have come down to us. The most remarkable one is entitled "*de focariis*," or "*contra focaristas*." Of this there are

several editions. It is on the unchastity of the clergy. For a statement of the names and editions, where there are such, of his sermons, see Schulze on Groot, in the third edition of Herzog's *Real Encyclopädie*; also *Studien en Bijdragen opt gebied der historische Theologie*, W. Moll. en J. A. de Hoop Scheffer, Amsterdam, Funke, 1872.

Several of his shorter treatises are mentioned in Busch, *Chronicle of Windesheim*, ed. Grube, p. 103; Bonet Maury, *Gerard de Groote*, Paris, 1878, has a list of his writings and extracts from them.

Forty-nine letters of Groot still exist. About half of these are still unpublished. Extracts from twelve are given by Busch in the *Chronicle of Windesheim*, and have been edited at full length by Clarisse and Acquoy. Eight letters are published by de Ram in the *Compte rendu Commission Royale d'Histoire Belgique*. Four more have been edited by Moll.

From the letters quoted by Busch, the following specimens may be given. They show in a remarkable manner the strength, tenderness, and Christian cheerfulness of Groot's character. To a priest tempted by the world he remarks—and here he doubtless thought of his own penitential retreat of three years in the Carthusian monastery—

“Hasten thou to the places where the Blood of Christ is glowing, in which the presbyters are following the canonical ordinances, and living the life of the saints, until Christ be formed in thee and, being spiritually taught, thou art able to walk worthy of God, and to recognize and drive back the fire-tipped darts of the devil, the flesh and the world, by the doctrine and graces of the faith.”

Again to another—

“Take heed lest thou leave God. If thou dost leave Him, Who is all that is good, what shall be left to thee, but all that is evil? He himself is all that is beautiful, all that is rich, all that is noble, all that is true, all that is sweet, all that is the object of desire and delight, for all this is in Him. The Creator cannot leave His creature. It is a necessity that the creature should serve his Lord, either in punishment, or in reward, unwillingly through a penal eternity, or willingly in heavenly joy.”

To a third, after severe remonstrance—

“My Beloved, all my affections call thee! Know that I do not seek thy goods, nor those of thy relatives, which by the help of God I hold cheap, and regard as dung, but I seek thee! Come then, beloved, to thy beloved, who truly loves thee, and loves nothing of thine, but that which is in thee of God. I ask thee, that thou wouldest vouchsafe to come to me, and to be comforted with me, who am not a little saddened about thee.”

On the other hand his bright cheerfulness of character appears in a letter to the admirable school-master, John Cele—

“My Brother and dear Friend, rejoice in the Lord, serve the Lord with rejoicing, ‘rejoice, and again I say rejoice’; constantly dwell on these words, ‘Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.’ Therefore be happy and joyous.” (*Hague MSS.*, No. 1541, fol. 259.)

Again, the spiritual comprehension of Jesus Christ is strongly insisted on in one of his letters discovered by Bonet Maury—

"What profit was the bodily sight of Jesus Christ to Pilate or Herod? It would have been no use to carry, to see, to welcome, the Christ, unless one had spiritually conceived and comprehended Him. Moreover, if His corporeal presence had not been withdrawn from the Apostles, the Holy Spirit would not have descended." (*Hanover MSS.*, No. XIII, 859, fol. 111.)

The following extracts may give some idea of his addresses—

"St. Paul, the revered teacher, instructs us that the Kingdom of God, which is above us, consists in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. These are the three virtues which we must possess within ourselves, or to the possession of which we ought to aspire with all our energy, so as to have a part in the Kingdom of God, which means that we should attain nearness to God, and that God should dwell in us, and no external exercises ought to take precedence of these. Every ascetic practice, such as fasting, flagellation, watching, chanting of Psalms, recitation of the Pater Noster, sleeping in hardness, or wearing a hair shirt, all this is of no value, except so far as it produces righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." (From *Hague MSS.*, No. 1541.)¹

Of translations by Groot, Bonet Maury gives the following list—

Into Latin, from the Dutch ;

"Ornatus spiritualium nuptiarum."

"De septem gradibus amoris."

"De duodecim virtutibus."

¹ Similar thoughts are expressed by Lorenzo Scupoli in his *Spiritual Combat*.

Into Dutch,

The seven penitential Psalms, and
The Hours of the Virgin Mary, for the Sisters of
Deventer.¹

Some interesting letters remain, addressed by Groot to one of his disciples, a novice at first, and afterwards accepted as a monk. This youth, like many earnest persons now-a-days, was over-anxious and scrupulous. Groot advises him about his bodily welfare and his spiritual condition. He warns him against self-chosen fastings. A monk should eat what is put before him, and avoid singularity. Moreover he is to take special care to sleep well, seven or eight hours, or even more, out of the twenty-four, as his mind needs strengthening by adequate rest.

"Alas! many of us willingly take up the cross, which we make for ourselves, either in wearing hair shirts, or in private prayers, or in special fastings, but the cross that God shapes for us, which is really needful for us, and should be carried and embraced by us, we not only fail to raise up willingly, but we even hate it, and cast it from us."

"Believe that thy sins are completely forgiven; give thyself fully over to the will and good pleasure of God; whatever He appoints for thee, be it life, or pain and illness, determine to endure all, for His sake, knowing that 'the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'"

In another letter he unconsciously shows one great secret of his influence, namely, his tender sympathy, all the more remarkable in one who could be so stern against evil.

¹ See page 78.

"Beloved of my heart in Christ Jesus! Thy letter about thine anxieties and perplexities I could not receive without being anxious together with thee! How earnestly I wish to devote myself in sympathy to thee and to thy companions, He knows Who 'bore our griefs and carried our sorrows.'"

Pointing his young disciple to the reading of the Holy Scriptures, he continues—

"We must take heed that we are not overcome by sadness, not cast down and destroyed thereby, lest instead of being led on by it to hope, as the Apostle desires, we should be brought down into cowardice and despair. 'God is our Refuge and Strength, therefore we will not fear though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.'"

"Was not Christ 'to suffer and to enter into His glory'? 'And we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.' For meditation on the Lord's sufferings would profit us little, unless the earnest longing to become like unto Him go with it. Therefore in every meditation on any part of the sufferings of Christ we must at the same time hear the Voice of Christ above us, 'Follow this, and thou shalt live,' or, 'This have I suffered for thee and for thy sake, that thou mightest set thy feet in My footsteps.'"

We may compare the words of Standfast in *The Pilgrim's Progress*—

"I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of, and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. His words I did use to gather for my good, and for antidotes against my faintings."

“And oh!” continues Groot, “How will the soul desire to be tried, despised and persecuted, that it may become fashioned in the likeness of its noble Lover, and may be pleasing to Him! Be on thy guard then against sadness, for it is like the moth in the dress and the worm in the wood, and destroys the beauty of the soul that is being made glorious within, and in which an inward work of grace and virtue is being wrought out. Therefore ‘Rejoice in the Lord and again I say rejoice.’”¹

¹ Some of these quotations from the letters of Groot are taken from a very valuable pamphlet by Karl Grube called *Groot und seine Stiftungen*, to which the student will do well to have recourse.

CHAPTER II

FLORENTIUS AND OTHERS

FLORENTIUS

FLORENTIUS lost no time in beginning to give systematic form to the associations begun by Gerard. He made the arrangements necessary for their outward management, while he watched over the maintenance of their inner spirit. As soon as was possible the monasteries of Windesheim and Zwolle were founded, to afford support to the Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods of the Common Life, and to offer an example of reform to the monks elsewhere.

Florentius Radewin (1350-1400) was born at Leerdam, near Utrecht. His parents were wealthy; his father sent him to the University of Prague,¹ where he took the degree of M.A. Thomas à Kempis informs us that, on his return, he lived for a time a worldly life, but that, through the preaching of Gerard, he passed on from the dignity of being a Master of Arts to become a humble learner in the school of Christ. After a while Gerard insisted

¹ There had been a "Studium Particulare" from early in the thirteenth century at Prague. In 1347 Charles IV obtained a Bull from Pope Clement VI, and gave an Imperial charter in the following year, for the foundation of a University or "Studium Generale."

on his being advanced to the priesthood, though Florentius himself desired to decline from motives of humility. He was presented to a canonry of Utrecht, but resigned this position of dignity for the lower office of a vicar at Deventer, so as to remain near Gerard. He grew into being, as à Kempis tells us, the flower and model of the devout life to all the brethren, and it is of the highest interest to note that to Florentius, more than to any one else, the formation of the spiritual character of Thomas à Kempis himself was due.¹ The devoutness which shines out both in the meditations and in the addresses that à Kempis has left us, had its foundation in the impression made on him in boyhood by the graces that he admired in Florentius. His biography of his revered superior is full of touching incidents, and grateful reference to the influence he exercised far and wide. He describes Florentius as being endowed with a natural grace and dignity of bearing, the attractions of which were increased by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He was so reverend in his aspect and manner when in the choir that the singers and choir boys used to regard him with wonder, and Thomas tells us that when he himself was present as a boy and saw Florentius there (for often the weak health of the latter prevented his attending), he instinctively out of reverence for him "refrained from any chatter."

"And it happened once upon a time," says Thomas, "that I was standing not far from him in the choir, and he

¹ It is stated that Florentius was not at first rector of the House at Deventer—after Groot's death—but became so later on.

turned and sang from our book. And as he stood behind me he placed his hands upon my shoulders, and I stood still, scarcely daring to move, wondering at his gracious condescension." (*Vita Flor.*, xi, 3.)

For seven years Thomas à Kempis, while attending as a youth the school of Deventer, under its master, Boheme, had the advantage of the supervision of the saintly Florentius, and it was his delight, in later years, to embody his recollections in the sketch of his life that follows upon his memoir of Gerard. He lays especial stress upon his kindness and affability to the poor and to strangers, of which the following instance among many may be given.

"In the month of May, the season when the wild herbs that are used as medicaments have their highest virtue, the good Father did not forget his poor; knowing that many were weak, ulcerous, and full of sores, he made them to come to his house upon an appointed day to receive certain medicines, and to have their bodies bathed in hot water in which aromatic herbs had been infused. And when they had been thoroughly bathed and washed, he made ready for each a most cleanly bed for sudorific treatment. And after receiving a cup of wine and some words of comfort, they went away with great delight to their lodging-houses, saying one to the other, 'how good and loving a man is the Master Florentius, and how good are the brethren that dwell with him in that they, for the sake of God, freely give us such things!'" (*Vita Flor.*, ch. xvi, 2.)

In higher work, in the guidance of souls, Florentius was especially successful. He was pressed upon from all sides by the many who came to consult him, and in spite of his great weakness of body, he would

struggle on, not to send any away unaided ; he left none without help or consolation who came to confide to him their secrets, he raised up the sad and tempted, and encouraged the young in purity of life. There were also devout priests in the diocese of Utrecht, efficient in their own work, who humbly submitted themselves with much reverence to Florentius, and were given to consulting that angelic man in their difficulties. Moreover, as regards the wide extent of his efforts, à Kempis tells us that

“ Florentius, that most ardent lover of Christ, to whom to live was Christ, and to die was gain, desired to produce much fruit in his day, and worked hard at being of use to many and to lead them towards the realms of eternal salvation.”

With this great object in view, he sent suitable persons to various monasteries and newly-established Houses to encourage the inmates. There were also in the Carthusian, Cistercian and Benedictine orders men who were glad to see and hear Florentius, when they were able to visit Deventer. (*Vita Flor.*, ch. xxvii.)

Yet, while exercising all this higher influence, Florentius, though rector of the House, was not above taking his turn among the Brothers, in working with his hands, according to the rule that Gerard and he had laid down, and this he carried out by performing menial tasks in the kitchen.¹

¹ It was part of the rule established by Benedict that the abbot of a monastery should take his turn of helping in the kitchen,

"Thus," remarks à Kempis, "he edified them all both by example and precept, seeking not what was pleasant to himself, but what was useful to others and a good example. Whenever he took his meals with the Brothers he placed the first dish upon the table with his own hands; and he grieved much because through the hindrance of his infirmity he was not able to take his place every day at the common table of the Brotherhood. For this cause he used to eat in the kitchen alone with the cook, having a small table meanly served. I myself, unworthy as I am, often made ready his table at his request, and brought the modest draught that he required, and I gladly served him with much cheerfulness of spirit." (*Vita Flor.*, ch. viii.)

For sixteen years Florentius, after Gerard's death, presided over the Brethren. Emaciated and weakened by the excessive abstinence he had practised in the earlier days of his religion (and which the Brotherhood had learnt to regulate later by more common-sense, after the deaths of several of their number), Florentius sank to rest on the Vigil of the Annunciation, soon after the *Ave Maria* had been sung, A.D. 1400, in his fiftieth year. As his last hour drew near he comforted and exhorted his beloved ones, and his spirit, fortified by the "grace of Christ," and the reception of the "Body of the Lord," went up "to the home-land of the angels which is fair with flowers." (*Vita Flor.*, ch. vii and ch. xxviii.) The frail earthly form was borne away by the weeping Brotherhood and the priests of the Church of St. Lebuin, followed by great crowds, and laid to rest near the altar dedicated to St. Paul, which Florentius had "often served." (*Vide* also the *Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes*, by à Kempis.)

Several of the letters of Florentius to the Prior of Windesheim are quoted by Busch, *Chronicle of Windesheim*, ed. Grube. They show his watchful care in considering the character and promise for the future of each member of the Brotherhood whom he sent on to the monastery of Windesheim. He was an expert in the study of the Christian life, and left nothing undone whether by chiding or encouragement to train his Brothers into saintliness.

Letters of Florentius and others, written at the time of the plague, are quoted in Dumbbar, *Analecta*, Vol. I, Deventer, 1719-22.

Reflections written down by Florentius on the spiritual life as the results of his study and experience are found in the *Lives* by Thomas à Kempis. He was the author of a tractate called *Tractatulus Devotus* (as to which more particulars are given in the chapter on Mysticism). Dier de Mudén (Dumbbar, *Analecta*, Vol. I, p. 50) tells us that he wrote a little book of extracts from the writings of the Doctors, and that Gerard Zerbolt is said to have used this in his two treatises, *Beatus Vir* and *Homo quidam*.

The following letter is quoted to show the watchful care of Florentius both for his own Brotherhood and for the monasteries. Had the same caution been more frequent, the entrance of many novices into the monastic life who had no vocation to special devoutness would have been avoided, and the deterioration of monasteries would have been less probable. The letter is addressed to Prior J. Huesden of Windesheim, and is found in Busch's *Chron.*, ed. Grube, p. 61.

"Very dear Father, in as much as Arnold Kalkar, cleric, has a leaning towards your Society, I think that for this reason you will gladly receive him. We indeed greatly need him and others, to occupy various positions. I would not, however, have you commend him much, or draw him in to take the vows if he show unwillingness. For there will be danger to our community, dearest Father, unless we are cautious in looking to the persons we accept, or whom we send forth from us. If any one of those whom you purpose to invest wishes to belong to us rather than to join your Society, I should doubt whether I ought to advise him to take the monastic vows without the adequate desire to do so on his part."

JOHN KETEL

FROM the other nine lives one or two may be briefly considered. John Ketel, or Cacabus, was one of the most interesting personalities known to Thomas à Kempis during his youth at Deventer. After being a wealthy merchant he became the cook of the Brother-house. Of him à Kempis remarks—

"Who can tell worthily the virtue of this man, and yet charity doth demand that I speak a few words, that this pearl buried in the Lord's field may not be hidden too long, but may be brought forth to the light for the edification of many." (À Kempis, *Vita J. Cacabi*, I.)

John Ketel was born at Duseborch, not far from Wesel, near the Rhine. His mother Christina, following her son's example, ended her days in the House of the Sisters at Deventer. He went into

trade in early life, and continued his worldly business for a long time with success. He then turned his attention to the idea of taking Holy Orders, but scarcely from very worthy motives, for he had begun his preparation for the clerical office by buying elaborate sacerdotal vestments, embroidered with figures in gold thread, fit for a bishop or a ruling abbot, in which he hoped to shine in ecclesiastical ceremonies. Yet he was not devoid of better thoughts, for he betook himself to the Brothers at Deventer to study in their House of clerics. And so deeply impressed did he become with the humility and unworldliness of the Brotherhood, guided by the holy Florentius, that an entire revulsion of thought took place in him. "He was changed into another man, and fired with a desire to renounce the world." He therefore decided to lower his pride by adopting the humblest occupation that he could find, and begged permission to remain with the Brothers as their cook.¹ Seizing with penitent hands the gorgeous treasures of his ecclesiastical wardrobe, he sold them, and clothed himself in a dark tunic and a gray cloak. Henceforth he worked for the rest of his life in the kitchen, with assistant Brothers to help him, and among many more directly spiritual resolutions he has recorded the practical wish, "that he may have a great love for his work in the kitchen, and a full resolve to die in this condition and not to depart from it." We gather from the same resolutions that he tried to do his best in his cooking,

¹ Dier de Mudén's account (Dumbar, *Analecta*, Vol. I, p. 3) is that Ketel accepted the cook's duties at the suggestion of Gronde, his confessor.

but it is far from surprising to find that, not being trained to it in early years, he did not always give satisfaction.

The ascetic Florentius was careful in the administration of his House as regards the welfare of others, and sometimes he said to Ketel, "How is it that this food hath such an ill savour, knowest thou not how to cook better? Mayhap the Brothers will murmur because they must eat thine ill-dressed food." But John, listening patiently to the rebuke and confessing himself negligent, replied, "I will gladly amend myself," and Florentius answered, "Thou dost often say so, yet thou dost make too small improvement." At another time as Florentius was passing through the kitchen, John came behind him and kneeling down took hold of the hem of his garment, asking pardon, and Florentius, looking down upon him, said, "What is it now?" and John answered, "I have spilled some wine from a jar in the cellar." Then said Florentius yet more sternly, "It is thus that thou dost waste our substance, now breaking something, now spilling something else," and straightway he turned away his face, and shut the kitchen door, leaving the cook upon his knees; but John, bearing all humbly, arose from the ground, making no complaint of this treatment, as though he had suffered injury, but holding the holy father, who had chidden him for his good, in the highest esteem. In these and other ways Florentius often proved John, and yet he loved him with an especial love and honoured him with all his heart for his faithfulness. (*Vita J. Cacabi*, 9, 10.)

But his lowly duties in the kitchen did not divert

him from spiritual exercises. He would repeat the Psalms while cooking, and regarded the material fire near where he worked as an incentive to spiritual fervour. To the poor who came for food he was affable and benevolent, and others he would admonish with a few well-chosen words as to the life of the soul. One day when some clerks from the school came to see him he remarked, "Well do we find it written in the Gospel, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven,' but nowhere do we find it written there, 'Blessed are the Masters of Arts.' And his hearers marvelling at the novelty of his words received them with reverence."

Though his opportunities of study had not been great, he learnt what was best of all and "studied lovingly the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, drawing therefrom a rule for every part of his own life."

When, amid the prayers of the Brethren, he had passed away, making a blessed end of a life completed in the service of Christ, the venerable Prior Huesden of Windesheim bore this testimony to his worth, "Would that I might die together with such a man, and in a like state of soul!"

At the close of his memoir of Ketel, à Kempis records the meditations and resolutions that this holy servant of the Brotherhood had written, and they well deserve the attention of the reader.

Students of devotional literature will be reminded of a devout man named Brother Lawrence, in the seventeenth century, who became a cook in the monastery of the barefooted Carmelites in Paris. His conversations and letters were published in an

English translation by Masters, London, 1855, the title being *The Practice of the Presence of God*.

LUBERT BERNER

THE death of one of the Brothers named Lubert Berner was deeply regretted by all members of their House at Deventer. After taking his degree at the University of Prague, Lubert returned to Zwolle, his native town. Not long after he escaped from his friends there, and joined Florentius at Deventer. In the memoirs of the Brethren à Kempis speaks as follows of him:—"He came to Deventer, to Florentius, then so renowned for the sanctity of his life, and being paternally received by him, he was taught to renounce entirely the pomps and vanities of the world, and to follow the humble life of Christ. With the whole fervour of his soul he put himself under the yoke of obedience, and seized with alacrity the discipline of a new life, offering himself daily to the Lord as a living sacrifice." "Now," continues à Kempis, "I will endeavour to tell you some exemplary things, concerning Lubert, when he was ordained priest, which I saw, and which I have often heard from the Brethren:" then follows an instance of his ready obedience.

"On a certain day, whilst sitting in his cell writing, Florentius sent for him. As soon as he heard this he put down the pen from his hand, and rose from his seat. But he was in the last line of the page, and there were but three or four words that remained to be written. Therefore the Brother that was sent for him said, 'finish that line, and

then the page will be complete, there is no hurry.' To this, like one truly obedient, he replied, 'Not one word more, it behoves me to obey.' When the business was done for which he had been sent, Lubert returned to finish his work, replenished with the fruits of obedience, even the joy of a good conscience. When Florentius afterwards heard of this prompt obedience of Lubert from the Brother he had sent, he said, 'Ah, Lubert, Lubert, how well you know what is your true gain, and what is for the advancement of your soul.'"

It was a custom among the Brothers to tell each other of their faults. Lubert gives us a good example of how we should behave when we are told of our faults. A Kempis relates that there were two clerics talking between themselves concerning Lubert, one of whom said, "It seems to me that Master Lubert assumes too austere a countenance, and when I would speak freely to him I dare not." The other answered, "If you like I will speak to him, and he will peradventure amend himself." He therefore went to him and said, "I want to speak openly to you upon a little matter." And he replied, "Very well." He therefore said, "There is a certain manner in you which is offensive, you are too abrupt, and look austere upon those who address you, so that they dare not come to you, and speak with you. You should be more affable, and sweeter in your words, so that they may gladly come to you." Then Master Lubert humbly responded, "I will most readily amend myself in this respect by the grace of God, I am grateful to you for having admonished me." "From that hour," adds à Kempis, "Master Lubert was changed as it were into another man, and

his countenance wore a joyful aspect towards those who approached him, while still preserving the propriety that was due." Zutphen (or Zerbolt), *Spiritual Ascensions*, ch. lxvi, may illustrate this point.

"The virtue of benevolence is needful for them that live together as a company and as regards certain outward signs of kindness which the philosopher calleth 'Friendship.' 'No man,' saith he, 'can live from day to day with one that is sour and hath nought that is pleasant in him,' and verily thou art constrained by a duty of natural uprightness to live with others showing that pleasantness that cometh of benignity. Wherefore thou oughtest to wear a kindly and pleasant manner especially when thou art with others, and where many are assembled together it doth befit thee to cloak sadness of heart with a certain cheerfulness of countenance. Yet overabundant levity should be avoided, lest the vice of vanity be matured by the pretext of goodness to others.' 'Therefore,' saith Hugo, 'When thou art in company with others, and it please thee that ye confer one with another, let your speech be of conduct or of the Scriptures, now let us sigh for the miseries of this present life, now rejoice together over the hope of joys to come, now refresh our hearts by revealing to each other the hidden things that each doth know, now sigh together for the vision of Jesus, and the good things that are in heaven. But if it be profitable sometimes to relax the tension of our minds by turning to lower things and pleasant thoughts, let such unbendings be thoroughly honest, free from levity, and though they lack an overweight of gravity, yet let them not lack edification.' . . . 'Humility doth temper staidness lest she seem puffed up, and benignity doth hinder her that she look not austere or graceless.'"

We must now proceed to notice something of what

à Kempis tells us of the death of Lubert. He informs us, that

“when the plague was raging in Deventer and the surrounding country, many of the Brethren were withdrawn from this life, and as we may piously believe, were joined to those above in the Light Eternal. It happened also that Master Lubert was seized with the same plague. In the month of July, three days before the Feast of the Blessed Mary Magdalene, he fell ill, and took to his bed, saying that he was not to continue long in this world. We, on the other hand, laboured with many prayers to God for him, and remedies were sought from intelligent doctors, because his life was very precious to us all. But his prayers were heard beyond ours, and they were full of desires to be admitted among the heavenly citizens.”

Thomas à Kempis gives many interesting particulars of Lubert's last illness and death. Florentius and some of the Brothers were away at the time, but Lubert dictated a letter to them, which ended with touching words of leave-taking. “Farewell, farewell, and farewell until the eternal world dawns upon us, ye whom I shall never again behold in this life.”

In Lubert's last hours he went through a remarkable trial. A spirit appeared to him in a dream which assumed the likeness of John Ketel, who had died two or three months before, and upbraided him with relying too much on the outward devotions performed around him, and on the asking the prayers of the Virgin Mary, St. Gregory, and St. Jerome. “You ought,” said the spirit of John Ketel, “to confide in God. God is angry with thee, that thou shouldest confide in them so much, and not

confide in Him alone. But because thou art weak and timid, and hast not done this from evil intent, He bears with thee, yet do not such things any more. I, Ketel, did not do so, yet I came to the Kingdom of heaven, without going through purgatory." Lubert, however, regarded this as a temptation, and rejected the dream as a deception. But a happier vision was granted to him before he passed away. Not infrequently we have noticed in our own day that dying Christians are allowed some foretaste of blessedness in what seems to be a vision of the opening gates of Paradise, or of the angel guardians which are to bear them hence. We find something of this, for instance, in the life of Dr. Pusey, in the record of the last moments of his dear child Lucy. In the same way Thomas à Kempis tells us of Lubert, that on a sudden, without any help, he sat up himself, striking together and elevating his hands, and fixing his eyes upon the wall, he bowed reverently towards it with great devotion, and with what strength he could gather in his poor broken voice, he exclaimed, "In Thy glory, in Thy goodness, in Thy mercy, receive me, receive me!" "And while thus sitting erect he went over the same words several times, and at length lay down on his bed again, and twice over he raised himself again, and went through the same actions and words. The last time he lay down he seemed to be in great astonishment and admiration. And I indeed asked the question, and said to him, 'Brother Lubert, what is it, how fare you?' and he replied, as if in a great emotion of delight, 'I saw wonderful things, wonderful; marvellous things, marvellous! great and marvellous things when I sat up.'

"And when he had said this, he added immediately : 'Call the Brethren, call the Brethren !' And as soon as they were assembled, he expired after a short agony, and happily fell asleep in the Lord, full of virtue and of good works, concerning whom God be blessed for evermore."

ARNOLD VON SCHOONHOVEN

ANOTHER life that may be glanced at, as illustrating the customs of the Brothers, and of their scholars, and also bearing upon the school-days of à Kempis at Deventer, is that of Arnold of Schoonhoven. He was the companion of Thomas as a boy, sharing the same cell and bed. These two young friends were united in heart by the same earnest aspirations after holiness, and the same assiduity in the prayers and studies of the place. Florentius received Arnold into his own "ancient" House, and for a while Thomas also, who says, "At this same time by the aid and counsel of Florentius, I also took up my abode in this House."

"At that time there was no small number of clerks living in the several Houses under the rule and discipline of that most devout Father, and also toiling at the work of copying books for the Schools." (*À Kempis, Vita Arnold von Schoonhoven*, I.)

Arnold is described by Thomas as an ideal school-boy, turning from the clamour of the others to attend closely to his task, and by his good influence winning many away from scurrilous talk and laughter. Nor was he without influence on older persons, whom

he used to bring to hear the pious discourses of Florentius. A Kempis remarks—

“I noted in Arnold many signs of devotion, for he was altogether exemplary and devout, both in the House and the School. . . . Every morning at the fourth hour when the bell gave warning, he awoke instantly and arose with alacrity, and then before the bed on bended knees he said a short prayer, fervently pouring forth the first fruits of his mouth to the Lord. After dressing himself quickly, he went in due time to the Oratory to recite the morning Office of the Blessed Virgin and of the Holy Cross, and when it was time to go to Mass he hastened to be among the first in church, and humbly bowed the knee before the altars, hearing the Office of the Mass with the reverence of a suppliant, and ceasing not from prayer and holy meditation until the solemn rites were finished in due order. He loved to choose a private place, far from the crowd, so that he might not be hindered in his prayers, and the more private his place the more fervent were his supplications. It sometimes happened that I stood by and noted secretly what he did, and was set on fire by his fervour in prayer, for I desired that I too might sometimes feel a devotion like to that which he seemed to feel every day. Nor was it wonderful that one who kept careful ward over his heart and lips should be devout in prayer, for the sound of joy was heard from his mouth by reason of the most sweet savour of his devotion.” (A Kempis, *Vita Arnold von Schoonhoven*, 4.)

After such a boyhood as is here described, it is not surprising that Arnold desired to remain all his life in the House of the Brothers. So we find that

“when he seemed to be sufficiently advanced in learning he occupied himself wholly with spiritual studies, deserting those of the Schools,”

and began to be instant and earnest in his prayers to abide all the days of his life in the House of Florentius. The prayer was granted, he remained with the Brothers at Deventer, but died among some whom he was visiting at Zutphen at the age of thirty-one, in the year 1430.

Arnold von Schoonhoven died thirty-seven years before the birth of Erasmus. But the latter in his *Colloquies* has given us a charming picture of a perfectly devout school-boy. In the hands of Erasmus this ideal of youthful piety is touched with his usual liberalism, but apart from that the devotion it inculcates is just what was realized in the character of the young companion of à Kempis (*vide* Erasmus, *Colloquies*, "Pietas Puerilis"). The "moderna devotio" had for one of its chief aims to mould the young to this religious earnestness.

CHAPTER III

EXTERNAL ORGANIZATION AND WORK

THE head of a Brother-house was called "rector." Under him was the procurator, who was general manager. The heads of the boarding-houses for boys were also called "procurators." Subordinate offices were given to several of the Brothers, as was done in monasteries. There was the "vestiarius, the magister novitiorum, the hospitarius or hospitalarius, the librarius, the rubricator, the cellarius, the pistor, the coquus, the hortularius."

Besides the name of "*fratres vitæ communis*," the Brothers acquired various other appellations, such as "*fratres devoti*," from their belonging to the "*moderna devotio*," and "*fratres bonæ voluntatis*," and "*fratres cucullati*," from their cap or head-dress; and they were often called Lollards by their enemies, though they had no real connection with the latter. They were also designated "*Fratres Hieronymi*," Brothers of St. Jerome, regarded as a patron of education.

The dress of the Brothers was black or grey; for priests and clerics it went down to the feet, for the lay brethren to the knee; a black cap was worn on

the head. The undergarment was washed every month in summer, every two months in winter. On entrance to the Brotherhood, each man could deal with his property as he thought fit, but if he once gave it over to the House he could not withdraw it in the event of his leaving. The Brothers rose at half-past three in the morning, and went to bed at nine in the evening. During the day an interval was allowed for rest. Dinner was at ten o'clock, supper at five. At meals the Scriptures or lives of the Saints were read, the Brothers taking a week each from the seniors downwards. The reader was required carefully to keep his ears open to the voice of the "corrector." Meat might be eaten on Sundays and other days, except Fridays and fast days. Their drink was one little mug of beer of the small size out of which wine is usually drunk. (Dumbar, *Analecta*, Vol. I, p. 14.) A chapter was held every week to deal with the faults that had occurred. Each one acknowledged his fault, and accepted the ruling of the Rector as regards the satisfaction or penalty.

The archives of the first Brother-house in Deventer lay down that the house is to be inhabited by four or more priests,¹ and by at least eight clerics, who remain in the house because they do not wish to enter a monastic order, and prefer to support the work and influence of the Brother-house. It is to be a part of their duty to accept and prove all God-

¹ Dier de Mudén corroborates this (Dumbar, *Analecta*, p. 49) by recording that when only two priests were left, in order that the number of four might be kept up, Florentius caused two of the clerics to be raised to the priesthood.

fearing men who come to them, and to see if they are adapted to a monastic life, especially for the monastery of Windesheim or Zwolle, or that of Marienborn near Arnheim, but to those who wish to remain as they are, the Brother-house is to be a refuge, where they may abide in good works.

We find also that the objects of the Brotherhoods of the Common Life are well set forth in a passage of the Statutes of the Brother-house in Hermerde. (Herzog, 3rd ed., p. 479, Schulze.)

“We have proposed to ourselves, for the salvation of our own souls, and for the edification of our neighbours in the purity of the Christian faith and the unity of our Mother, the Holy Christian Church, to live together in common by the labour of our hands, in the service of God and in chastity, and in agreement with each other; moreover we desire to live a simple life without begging, to yield respectful obedience to our superiors, to wear a plain and humble habit, to observe the canons of the Holy Fathers, as far as they bear upon our affairs, and to follow sacred exercises and studies with diligence. We desire not only to lead a blameless life ourselves, but also to offer a good pattern and example, and to assist in the conversion of others, and we trust that God may deign to move and convert the hearts of others by our means.”

With the statements of these ancient records we may compare the words of Hirsche in Herzog's *Encyklopädie* (2nd ed., p. 687):

“Whoever wished to pass on to the closer obligations of conventual life was free to do so, and the previous sojourn among the Brothers would be a useful school of probation,

while any one who was not contented to stay and work in the house was at liberty to leave."

We have seen that Groot objected to permanent vows being taken in the Brother-houses. He regarded the monastic vow and life as the higher state, but he wished to offer a religious refuge to those who might or might not eventually desire the monastic calling, and who, while in the Brother-houses, had their choice before them. And he hoped that the Brothers, less secluded than the monks, would have more contact with persons in the world, and so influence them for good, through the various labours they undertook.

Though donations were made by devout persons from time to time, yet the Houses of the brethren and sisters were chiefly maintained by the proceeds of their various industries. Men of all classes were to be found in their houses. Some were of noble birth, some had inherited wealth, some had acquired learning, others were simple working men, ready to bring their labour to bear on the service of the community ; all were Brothers together, but they worked according to their previous education and calling, except that all took turns to help in the kitchen and in the outdoor labour of the garden. The more educated copied books, or bound them, and in some places, after the introduction of printing, they set up and worked a press. As a part of their occupations, and of their religious life, some of them wrote what were called *rapiaria*. These were books of extracts from spiritual writers, intended for personal edification. Sometimes moral

passages from the classics were inserted, Seneca being a favourite author. Writings of a religious character were also produced by the more capable of the Brothers for the use of the laity, in the vulgar tongue, and such books were read aloud by lay-folk when they met for mutual edification. Gerard had set the example of this. For Thomas à Kempis, in his *Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes*, informs us that Gerard himself wrote profitable treatises for the good of souls, and to explain Scriptural truth, and that he translated the *Hours of the Blessed Virgin*, and certain other of the *Hours*, from the Latin into the Teutonic language, so that simple and unlearned laics might have, in their mother-tongue, wherewith to occupy themselves.

Thus was it that these religious ascetics carefully strove to cultivate the inner life of communion with God, and the outward duties of earthly work and of usefulness and benevolence towards men. The inner life, nourished by prayer and meditation in solitude, and by common worship and frequent Eucharists together, was their first, but by no means their only aim. The devotion whereby their own souls were refreshed, flowed forth in deeds of love to the poor and sick, such as their Lord and Master had shown in His own Example, and had inculcated by precept upon His disciples. Truly a blessed life, passing from prayer to work, and then returning again from work to prayer!

It was the practice of the Brothers not only to make the confessions usual in the Roman system to their priests, but also to acknowledge and confess

their faults to each other in conversation and to receive and offer mutual admonitions. Such acknowledgments were of an informal character, and additional to those made at the weekly chapters of the community.

In these mutual interchanges of confidence the early members of the Brotherhood dwelt together in holy love and peace and joy, and so great was their helpfulness to each other, that one would often rise before the time, and fulfil the task of another, and forbear afterwards to let him know who had done the work.

It has been stated that the Brothers differed from many of the priests and friars, in desiring that the Scriptures should be fully accessible to the laity. The usual view of ecclesiastics was that the portions of the Bible read in the church services were quite sufficient for them, but the Brothers took a far more liberal line. They cannot, however, be fairly represented as anticipating Protestant opinions respecting the Bible, as they entertained no doubt that the dogmas of the Roman Church were quite consistent with the Scriptures. They appear to have desired to spread the Scriptures among the people simply because the reading of them would contribute to the salvation of their souls, and had been referred to as a duty by our Lord Himself. Such arguments were pointedly brought forward by one of the Brothers, whose life has been recorded by à Kempis, and one of whose devotional writings is described later on, namely Gerard Zerbolt (1367-1398), also called Gerard of Zutphen. He was a Librarian of the

Brother-house at Deventer, and was remarkable for his activity about books. He did all he could to promote the use of the Bible in the vulgar tongue, and wrote a treatise advocating prayers for the people in the same, *de precibus vernaculis*, and another, *de utilitate lectionis sacrarum literarum in lingua vulgari*.¹ In this latter he argued that the Bible and other devotional books should be accessible to the laity in the vulgar tongue, for that the Bible had not been intended by God for the clergy only, but for laymen and unlearned persons. He points out to the friars and other opponents that the Saints and Fathers of the Church, and indeed Christ Himself, had bidden the people to search the Scriptures. Zerbolt argues that Holy Scripture is not intended for the instruction of one especial class of men, but for every one, therefore it may and ought to be read by every one. Holy Scripture itself appeals to all to read it. If the laity are exhorted to attend church to hear the divine Word, why should they not read for themselves what they there listen to? Gregory, Augustine, Chrysostom and other teachers of the Church, frequently encourage the laity to study the sacred writings, which they certainly would not have done if they had held it improper or unallowable. Further, Holy Scripture is given for the support of the natural law written in the heart; this is apt to be darkened by worldly

¹ His vigorous arguments are set forth at some length by Ullmann, *Reformatoren vor der Refn.*, Vol. II, p. 99, etc. (Gotha, 1866). Parts of them are quoted in the original Latin by Hirsche, Herzog's *Real Encyclopädie*, 2nd ed.

affairs, and it is most important that laymen, returning from their occupations, should be able to see where they have gone wrong, looking at themselves in the mirror of Holy Writ.

Moreover, laymen frequently read and learn worldly and devilish poetry, and read books in the vernacular tongue about the Trojan war, about Roland, or about the beauty of Diana, etc., and yet literary and intelligent men do not blame them for such reading, or prohibit it, and it would be most unreasonable that laymen should be forbidden the sacred Scriptures rather than such fables and stories as these. Those who find fault with the laity for reading religious books in their own language, would be much better occupied in encouraging them to have such books to read, rather than to be drinking in taverns and spending their time uselessly. Again, the books of the Bible were written in the language then understood of the people, and it is unreasonable (as Nicholas de Lyra points out in reference to the Epistle to the Romans) that the Bible should only be read in Latin, and not in whatever idioms the reader can best understand. He remarks that the Scriptures were originally written in Hebrew, and in Greek, and that they are more authentic in these than in the Latin version.

The clerical members of the Brotherhoods would take the lead in the addresses called "collations." The collations were meetings at which mutual conference was held on spiritual subjects, or else addresses were given by a single speaker. But the Brothers did not hold these only for themselves; they

promoted them among the lay folk, when exhortations were given them by members of the Brotherhood in the vulgar tongue. These addresses, whether given among the Brothers, or for the outside laity, were of a less formal character than sermons, and calculated to deal simply with the practical needs of those who were present. On festival days the public were admitted to the collations held in the Brother-houses.¹

It might have been thought that such excellent pursuits of earthly and spiritual labour would have commended the Brotherhood to all men. Yet they had their enemies. The friars were jealous of a religious society that put them to shame by labour. Others asserted that religious men had never before resided together without permanent vows. So the Dominican Grabow argued that it was a mortal sin to follow poverty, chastity, and obedience, except within one of the recognized orders. At the Council of Constance, Gerson supported the Brothers, and they were also defended by their friends the Windesheim monks. As a result, the Council decreed in 1418 that Grabow was to choose between recantation and the stake. The Brothers also received the sanction of several Papal rescripts.

A still more serious trouble befell the Brothers, and others among the devout, when the excellent

¹ *Imitatio*, Book I, ch. x. : "Juvat tamen non parum ad profectum spirituale, devota spiritualium rerum *collatio*, maxime ubi pares animo et spiritu, in Deo sibi sociantur."—"Our spiritual progress is not a little helped by religious conferences, especially where persons of one mind and spirit are gathered together in God."

F. de Blanckenheim, Bishop of Utrecht, died. A quarrel arose as to his successor, Rudolph de Diepholt, being supported by the local laity, while Swederus de Culenborch was chosen by the Pope, who defended his nominee by excommunications, and by an interdict which meant a prohibition to conduct any religious services. Most of the Canons of Deventer, and most of the clergy, obeyed the Pope, and quitted Deventer. The Brothers decided to observe the interdict, and the Sisters of five houses in Deventer followed their example. That winter they remained without attending church, so did many other devout persons of both sexes, and "we were not a little straitened," says Dier de Mudén, "at that time" (1425). Their Rector, Godefried, went from Deventer to Geldria, at Epiphany. Not long after some civil officers came with thumb-screws demanding him, and they would have imprisoned him and tortured him. Soon after the magistrates turned out the Brothers, allowing them to leave two, and the cook, in charge. They then went forth, and joined Godefried at Zutphen. It was six years before they returned to Deventer.¹ (Dier de Mudén in Dumbarton's *Analecta*, p. 72, etc.) Dier goes on to add that much good resulted from this tribulation. "I believe that the devil thought he was going to extinguish the devotion which had sprung up in the diocese of Utrecht since the days of Master Gerard, and this danger was turned into a gain," as some fresh houses were founded in

¹ The duration of their absence is differently given elsewhere.

consequence in the region where they took refuge, and they were eventually able to return in peace. In the *Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes*, Thomas à Kempis gives a graphic account of the monks leaving their home, and of the perils they encountered.

CHAPTER IV

DOCTRINAL POSITION AND MYSTICISM

WE are not to regard the teaching of the founders of the "moderna devotio" as in any sense a new doctrinal departure. It was the traditional line of thought received from the Fathers and other holy men of the Latin Church; with the addition of the results of the spiritual intuition of men such as Tauler and Ruysbroeck. The name "moderna devotio" is unfortunate, though as it was adopted at the time, we are obliged to retain it. For it obscures the fact that it rested on the ancient foundations, and that Gerard Groot and Florentius did not aim at any novelty in their theological ideas. We must be careful not to read into their teaching the views of a subsequent age, even though we may regard some of those views as more consonant with the New Testament.

It has been stated that the "moderna devotio" of Gerard Groot brought into prominence the vital truths of Christianity, forgiveness and salvation through Christ, the renewal of the heart by the Holy Spirit, and the importance of the study of the Scriptures. But these doctrines were conceived in accordance with the teaching of the best minds in

the mediæval church, and, to say the least, their mode of looking at them differed considerably from that which prevailed after the Reformation. That they clearly attributed the forgiveness of sin to nothing less than the merits of our Lord's Passion appears for instance from the following passage, referring to one of the monks of Windesheim—

"It was as if he remained beneath the Cross, or even abode on the Cross, with Jesus Christ. There he entered in thought through the open wounds into the heart of Jesus, and, uniting heart with heart, he washed himself from all his sins in the Blood of Christ." (Busch, *Chronicle of Windesheim*, ed. Grube, p. 195.)

Gerard of Zutphen refers in his tractates to the Passion of our Lord as our "justification." Yet Groot and his followers were in the habit of referring more frequently to the idea of sympathizing with, and realizing in their own trials, the sufferings of Jesus, than to that of justification by His merits. Their ever present purpose is to be conformed to His image,¹ in lowliness, patience and charity; salvation was impossible without a growing likeness to Christ. Further, the Holy Spirit was to bestow and maintain, in response to their constant penitence and humility, the "bona voluntas," which meant a rightly directed will, and the "devotio," which led towards the vision of God, and demanded also the constant service of the sin-stricken and the needy.

¹ Thus in the first chapter of the *Imitatio*, the reader of the words of Christ is told that he must "endeavour to conform his life wholly to the life of Christ."

Gerard Groot and his disciples believed in transubstantiation, in prayer to the Virgin Mary and the saints, asking their intercession, and all the other accessories of Roman Catholic doctrine. They aimed at saving souls, but were content with the means offered by the Church as it was. Not to perceive this, is to read subsequent history into the story of their lives. They did not anticipate, or desire, a doctrinal Reformation. It may, however be freely admitted, that their advocacy of placing Scripture in the hands of the people, which most of the monks and clergy were opposed to, and their popular explanations of the Scripture to the laity, contributed to sow the seeds of religious life more widely, and so, indirectly, prepared for the wider harvest of Reformation days.

Groot indeed, quoted by à Kempis, has described his own theological position as at the same time resting on Christ, and yet accepting all the dogmas of the Roman Church—a position which to us must appear intellectually inconsistent—though it worked fairly well in practice.

Gerard himself describes his faith as resting upon Jesus Christ Who is the chief corner-stone, and the foundation, and claims to have taught the Catholic religion, without any abatement, according to the interpretation of the Scriptures given by the Saints and Fathers, namely, Ambrose, Gregory, Augustine, Jerome, Chrysostom, Dionysius, Bernard, Bede, Isidore, Hugo, and Richard. He declares that he subjects all his teaching to the judgment of the Holy Roman Church, "to whom," he adds, "with all humility I everywhere and always submit myself."

(*Vita Ger.*, xviii, 1.) And some of these Fathers are frequently quoted in the writings of the Brothers.

But Groot was not blind to the decadence of the Popes, much as he revered the Papacy. Writing to Gulielmus de Salvarvilla, Archdeacon of Liège, he remarks—

“We are suffering above all in our head, the Pope ; and, according to the doctrine of Gallienus, mischief in the head is a symptom of a grave malady, and the effect of a fever which is ravaging the whole organism. We all, like inexperienced doctors, perceive only the actual signs of the evil, without paying heed to the older symptoms, that are not less important. Those we leave entirely on one side, whereas the present suffering is not the chief cause of the degeneration. This schism will not be healed without leaving a long scar. . . . And I, who long for the return of the Church to unity, wish that the two rival Popes were both in heaven, chaunting the *Gloria in Excelsis*.” (Hague MSS., No. 154¹, folio 115^r, folios 165^r and 166^r.)

In what degree were Gerard and his disciples affected by mysticism? There was an element of spiritual teaching derived from Ruysbroeck the mystic, by Gerard, that well deserves to be noticed. The chief tenets of the mystics were not inconsistent with the usual doctrines of Christianity, but they emphasized with special force the great object they had in view, namely, the union of the soul with God. Gerard, however, only went with Ruysbroeck's mysticism as far as it was strictly consistent with the dogmas of the mediæval Church. He translated books of his from the Teutonic into the Latin tongue,¹ two of

¹ *Ecce Sponsus*, or the Spiritual Nuptials, has been translated

which were called *Ecce Sponsus* and *De gradibus Amoris*. In doing so he is said to have altered some expressions in the direction of greater orthodoxy. Gerard had the deepest reverence for the wise and saintly Ruysbroeck, but, in the collations or conferences they held together, Gerard did not hesitate to express his views, and remarked to the revered mystic that he regarded some passages of his writings as contrary to the teaching of the Church. To this Ruysbroeck replied that he had "never written anything except by the guidance of the Holy Ghost." On a subsequent occasion Groot said things that Ruysbroeck did not agree with about the fear of God's wrath. As to this John de Pomerio, a follower of Ruysbroeck, remarks, "Master Gerard endeavoured to imbue the devout Prior with the fear of the penalties of hell, and did not succeed ;" and the same writer turns the tables on Gerard by saying, "the Master was wounded more by the dart of fear than by the spark of love." Groot, at a collation of the monks, suggested to Ruysbroeck that he had not enough of fear, and relied too much on the mercifulness of God. Ruysbroeck answered that "hitherto he had certainly not been disquieted by any fear, but that he was ready to accept whatever God had adjudged for him, whether it were life or death."¹ These words were spoken in

in an abbreviated form by the Rev. Dr. Inge, in *Selections from the German Mystics* (Methuen).

¹ With this old world confidence, a modern instance may be compared—Death of Lady Pembroke, sister of Prince Woronzoff and mother of Sidney Herbert (p. 35, Vol. II, *Life of Sidney Herbert*). Her son writes as follows—

"She had so long contemplated death, and was so fully prepared to meet it, so strengthened by that peace and comfort

the true mental attitude of mysticism, and in these differences between the two holy men we have a crucial example of the point at which the followers of Gerard, of whom the saintly à Kempis was one, drew the line; accepting such of the tenets of mysticism as agreed with the doctrines of the mediæval Church, but discountenancing the independence of thought to which mystics were prone. Mystics divided the progress towards the union of the soul with God into three stages, not always indicated by the same name, but carrying the same meaning. The first was the "purgative way," which we may illustrate by the sentence from the Gospels, "as they went they were cleansed." This stage included the path of active duties, doing what would please God, so as to pass onward to loving Him. The second was the "illuminative way," when he who had done the will of God was beginning by personal experience "to know of the doctrine, that it was of God." The third was the "unitive way," when the soul draws near to spiritual union with God, and as Florentius added, to spiritual union with its neighbour.

which God grants to prayers like hers, that death had lost all its terrors for her. Even this highest result of all earthly excellence to her humble mind was for a moment the source of misgiving. She said to me she had always put her whole faith and trust in God, that she had been taught this from a child, but that she had so loved Him that she doubted whether she had feared Him as she ought. 'My heart has been so full of love that there has been no room for fear. Even now, at this awful moment, I cannot feel fear. Is not this wrong?' After this Charles Harris and the Bishop of Salisbury at different times both prayed and conversed with her, and this one doubt seems to have left her. Indeed hers was that 'perfect love which casteth out fear.'

The most remarkable of the few writings of Florentius that remain is of a mystic character. It was edited in 1862 by Notke, at Friburg in the Breisgau. (Herder.) This treatise refers to the "via purgativa," and the "via illuminativa," showing that Florentius was acquainted with the ideas of mysticism. Its title is *Tractatulus devotus de extirpatione vitiorum et passionum et acquisitione verarum virtutum, et maxime, caritatis Dei et proximi et veræ unionis cum Deo et proximo*. "A little devout treatise as to rooting out vices and passions, and gaining true virtues, and above all, love to God and our neighbour, and true union with God and our neighbour."

"Devotio," according to Florentius, "non est aliud nisi desiderium animæ ad Deum," "is nothing else but the longing of the soul for God." The "gratia devotionis" led to the hatred of self, and of worldliness, and inspired the desire and the effort to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ, and to be made like unto Him. He called for a loving activity for the good of others, both as regards their bodies and their souls.

Neither Gerard nor Florentius would admit for a moment a merely self-centred religion, forgetful of care and labour for those around. For the sake of attaining this devotion the Brothers of the Common Life were anxious to sacrifice every earthly aim. Even secular learning was of small account, compared with the supreme claim of spiritual enlightenment. Contemplation alone was not the way to this enlightenment. Mild and gentle as the Brother of the Common Life was advised to be, he was none the less to become a stern soldier of Jesus Christ. In the *Lives* above referred to, written by à Kempis,

military terms are constantly in use. To him the spiritual warfare was the reality, earthly warfare only a shadow and emblem of that greater and far more real war. The Brother is described as clothed with heavenly armour, practising daily the discipline and drill of the divine conflict, maintaining a life-long contest with the powers of evil, promptly obedient to the orders of his superior, victorious at last through the victory of his Lord.

HENRY MANDE AND GERLACH PETERS

WITH reference to the vein of mysticism which lay behind the active work of the Brothers we must not omit to notice two remarkable members of the Brotherhood, who were animated by the spirit of mysticism and use its familiar phrases, Henry Mande and Gerlach Peters.

Mande was born in 1360, at Dordrecht ; an account of him is given by Busch, in his *Chronicle of Windesheim*. He was much favoured with heavenly visions, but these, being not regarded as uncommon in the mediæval Church, would not of themselves have entitled him to the name of mystic. The most remarkable is a vision of Gerard and his disciples in glory. (Busch, ed. Grube, ch. xlv.) He joined the Brothers at Deventer in the time of Florentius, but soon after went on to Windesheim. He was the author of fourteen mystical treatises of which Busch gives an account (ed. Grube, ch. xliii, p. 125). Busch tells us that he left these writings to the library of the monastery and that they were "in franceno et teu-

tonico propria manu pulchre descriptos" ("beautifully written out, by his own hand, in the French language and in the Middle-Netherland dialect"). Busch, it appears, translated their titles into Latin as he wrote his *Chronicle*. The following are the names of some of them—

Liber unus, quomodo veterem hominem cum actibus suis exuere debemus, et Christo nos unire: "A book treating of how we ought to put off the old man with his deeds, and to unite ourselves to Christ."

Liber de intimis Domini nostri Jesu Christi, et septem viis quibus itur ad ea: "A book respecting the inner secrets of our Lord Jesus Christ, and about seven ways whereby we attain to them."

Liber de tribus statibus hominis conversi, in quibus consistit perfectio vitæ spiritualis: "A book of the three states of a converted man, in which lie the perfection of the spiritual life." These are described as "das werkende" (activa), "das ynnighe" (devota), "das scouwende" (contemplativa). These are, of course, in somewhat differing words, the usual three stages of the mystic's progress, more often described as the "purgative," the "illuminative," and the "unitive."

Further mystical ideas are carried out in the following—

Amorosa querela amanti animæ ad Deum suum pro liberatione tenebrarum defectuumque suorum: "A loving and plaintive plea of the loving soul to its God for deliverance from its darknesses and its defects."

Allocutio brevis amanti animæ cum amato suo: "A short converse of the loving soul with its lover."

Liber de vita spirituali et devota, in quibus consistit, et ejus impedimenta: "A book of the spiritual and devout life, in what it consists, and of its obstacles."

Liber de vita contemplativa, in quibus consistit, et puncta, quibus impeditur: "A book of the contemplative life, in what it consists and the points at which hindrances occur."

Dyalogus sive allocutio devotæ animæ cum Deo amato suo, responsio ejus ad animam devotam: "A dialogue or converse of the devout soul with God, Whom it loves, and His answer to the devout soul."

Several of these treatises have been edited by Moll (John Brugman, i, 259). *Vide* also Herzog's *Encyklopädie*, 2nd edition, article by Hirsche on the Brothers.

The following passage illustrates the line of Henry Mande's thought—

"The Masters of Arts teach the arts of this world, but the divine Wisdom is taught by the inspiration of God, without any intervening means. Divine Wisdom is placed in and impressed into the hearts of men by divine illumination, but the other words by pen and ink, written on parchment. As things are, many ecclesiastics rely entirely upon their letters, and leave the truth alone. They take the leaves, and abandon the fruit. They use up their silver, that is their understanding and knowledge, but not for bread, that is not for such things as strengthen and nourish the soul. That is why there are so many that are sick and weak, that they cannot grasp or comprehend the things that belong to the soul; and that is why so many sleep, and close the eyes of their souls wherewith they should see God. For they have placed their perfection only in external works and exercises, and remain there,

and do not hear what our Lord teaches; namely that one thing is needful, and that we must pass through our good works and exercises and come to the love of God and union with Him."

GERLACH PETERS

(*Vide Grube, Chronicle of Windesheim*, ch. liv, p. 156, and Moll—Brugman, 1-6)

HE and Mande were the chief representatives of the mystical element in the circle of Groot's disciples. Gerlach was born at Deventer in 1378. He was educated in the School there, and was a loved young disciple of Florentius, who advised him to settle at Windesheim, where he became a monk in 1403. He died at the age of thirty-three. Busch describes his appearance and character and ends by saying, "by the presence of the Holy Spirit he bore Christ in his bosom." It is satisfactory to find that his mysticism was accompanied by common sense, for he learnt by experience the importance of keeping his body as strong as he could, and Busch tells us that he was careful to masticate his food well, as if drawing in devotion from his plate. When his end was approaching, he, in his humility, requested the Prior to have the meditations he had written for himself and not for others destroyed, but the Prior replied that he might leave that decision to him. Among these there was a *Breviloquium*, written for a cleric (probably himself), a treatise adapted to the various needs of the life of a Brother.

Gerlach is stated to have written it when twenty-five years of age. The following quotations will serve to show that it was composed in the spirit of real devotion. Referring to the duty of seeking God in singleness of aim, and not from religious selfishness, nor for one's own convenience or consolation, he prays—

“Lord, Thou knowest my heart, Thou knowest that I would as willingly be in tribulation, in desolation, in darkness and dryness, as in abundant consolation and light, if Thy honour could the better be served thereby. And behold, I, the least and youngest in Thy house, have brought a small offering, all indeed that I am, all that I ever can do, not seeking myself, nor mine own glory. Therefore, I pray Thee from mine inmost heart, in which I love Thee, not to forsake me in the time of my old age, and of my tribulation, in the time when I may seem to be abandoned by every one, but do Thou perfect my steps in Thy paths, that those who trouble me may know that Thou hast not altogether left me, but hast tried me, that I might be found faithful.”

Again—

“God's servants have greatly longed for the glory of heaven and panted after it with their whole heart. Yet they have feared lest they should entertain these desires from an aversion to remaining fixed on the Cross with Christ, and a dislike of tribulation, knowing that from such motives the wish to be with the Lord would not be a right one. Therefore their chief study has been to gain the joy that is given to the saints here below, in the knowledge of truth and wisdom, and to refashion their inner man after the likeness of God, and to conform their outer life to the life of Jesus.”

The most important and best known of Gerlach's writings is *Soliloquium cujusdam regularis, a cordis multiplicitate ad unum summum bonum se continuo colligentis*: "A soliloquy of a certain monk, who kept on recalling himself from the many thoughts of his heart to the one only supreme good." The oldest Latin edition appeared at Cologne in 1616 (I. Kinck) with the title, *Alter Thomas de Kempis ; sive ignitum cum Deo soliloquium Gerlaci Petri Daventriensis*; "The second Thomas à Kempis, or the fervent soliloquy with God, of Gerlach Peters of Deventer." It has been translated into Dutch, French and German, and English.

Some reference should here be made to the devotional writings of Brother Gerard Zerbolt, or Gerard of Zutphen, whose tractates have been already mentioned. À Kempis tells us that Gerard Zerbolt wrote two devotional books, called from their opening words, *Homo quidam*, a certain man, and *Beatus vir*, blessed is the man.¹ In *Beatus vir*, or *The Spiritual Ascensions*, he offers many weighty considerations as to rising to newness of life, and we are reminded by his working out of the subject, of our own collect, in which we pray, that like as our Lord Jesus Christ has ascended into the heavens, "so we may in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell." The general tenor of his tractate may be indicated as follows—God intended man to be noble, but he has sunk by his choice of evil, and lies in a valley of tears, in a deep cleft. Ascent is necessary

¹ Ancient black-letter copies of these treatises exist ; but they are contained in their most convenient forms in La Bigne, *Bibliotheca Patrum*, Vol. XXVI.

to the mountain from which he has fallen. "Blessed is the man" who, in dependence on God, makes this effort. There are ladders to help us, so we should lay hold of the ladder offered us, and remember that "the Lord is leaning upon the top of it." The fall into the deep valley has not wholly destroyed our powers and affections towards what is good, but they have been bent and distorted. To recover we must examine ourselves, and see where we have gone wrong. We must plan beforehand, and consult wise persons. When we have realized our sins it is well to confess them to a holy man. In his following chapters various means to be adopted for ascending are considered. The most important is to do so by going over the holy life and sorrowful Passion of the Saviour, and by the reception of the Holy Communion. The various stages of our Lord's Passion are then impressively described under the title of the "Mountain of Myrrh."

Gerard of Zutphen was not specially a mystic, but there is a reference to mystical ideas in the word "ladder," and the following passages lay stress on the Vision of God.

"When (in the ascending man) affection to virtue hath become a habit, so also being thus disposed, he must be united with God by ardent Love, ever prepared to do the good pleasure of the Divine will through his fervency of spirit, and intent upon the contemplation of the divine; for indeed he doth cleave to God through fervent love, and by reason of the vision of Him doth abhor vice and sin. By this love and this vision he is ever kindled with zeal, doth earnestly love Truth, is fired with the desire of

wisdom and loveth holiness of life and discipline of character. Likewise such a character doth most vehemently loathe and persecute all impurity of heart within itself, and, as if by its very nature, doth both reject all that is evil and embrace what is good. This is the fruitful mountain, and whosoever shall ascend it may go in and out and find pasture."

Again—

"By his understanding he doth often climb beyond himself to the apprehension of the vision of God, albeit he doth apprehend this 'as in a glass darkly.' But going out he is kindled to the love of the Creator by the knowledge of the creature and its beauty."

CHAPTER V

EDUCATION

THE main object of the Brothers of the Common Life being the advancement of piety and good morals, this was their leading thought when they came into contact with the education of boys. They accepted invitations in connection with existing schools with a view to the promotion of a religious tone and good conduct. They did not attempt, except in a few cases later on, to start schools of their own, but adopted the far more practical course of assisting the schools for boys that already existed in towns. When the value of their religious influence became evident, the authorities of many cities, both in Holland and Germany, invited their co-operation, and even provided houses for them to reside in. In Deventer there had long been a noted school connected with the ancient Church of St. Lebuin. This school was greatly benefited by the influence of the Brothers, and we read of the support given by Florentius to its head master, Boheme, under whom Thomas à Kempis was trained as a boy. When Thomas came to Deventer (about A.D. 1392) many scholars were either boarding out without payment in devout families in Deventer, or residing

in the "*antiqua domus*" of Florentius, "*domus Vicariæ St. Pauli*."¹ Thomas was received at first into the House of Florentius, and was then by his care boarded out with a devout widow, while those who remained as boarders in the house of Florentius were the precursors of an arrangement which obtained wide extension where the Brothers had connection with town schools. It became their custom to have boarding-houses for scholars, to give a religious home to the boys while attending the public school. Dier de Mudén tells us that when Rambertus became dean of the Church of St. Lebuin, he intended to keep three saddle-horses, but the Lord changed his intention, for instead of three horses he kept six poor and devout scholars who were sent him by the Brothers. He paid their whole expenses and they dined in his house. At Deventer a wealthy merchant provided for the building of another house, which was called "*nova domus*," or "*domus scholarium*." This building was intended for scholars and young clerics, many of whom proposed to become Brothers, or to enter monasteries as Canons Regular. In 1441 another house for scholars was erected at Deventer, and called "*Domus S. Hieronymi*." The procurator of the house is also named "*pædagogus*."

As regards the school of Zwolle in the time of Gerard Groot, his intimate friend, John Cele, though not a Brother, was rector of it (1417). At first the Brothers occupied only one house at Zwolle, "*das*

¹ St. Lebuin's was a collegiate church with a dean and canons and several vicars, of whom Florentius became one, so as to be near Gerard Groot. He celebrated at the altar of St. Paul, whence the name of his vicarage house.

arm clerkenhuys." Then a rich nobleman built them a second house, and many scholars resided in it. About a hundred years later the Brothers erected another house at Zwolle at their own expense, entirely devoted to "Musarum alumniis." This alone held 200 scholars, and was specially intended for those who were needy. So it came about gradually, that in all towns where the Brothers settled, a needy scholar found a ready reception and a convenient shelter, and if there was not room for him either in the Brother-house or in their school boarding-house, they could always find him a home, without charge, among one or other of the devout burghers. A "procurator" was set over these houses, and it appears that he not only carried on the daily arrangements and preserved discipline, but also gave, as a Brother of the Common Life naturally would, religious instruction in the house. An instance of a master of a town school who, though not a Brother, was filled with the spirit of devotion, occurs in the case of John Cele, rector of the town school of Zwolle. He had accompanied Gerard Groot on his first visit to Ruysbroeck. In his teaching he was very successful, having under him at times as many as a thousand scholars. He was fond of saying, "The Kingdom of Heaven is not in knowledge or in speech, but in good works and virtue." Hence the religious instruction of his boys took, with this earnest man, quite as important a place as furthering their advance in human learning. (Busch, *Chronicle of Windesheim*, ed. Grube, pp. 204-222.) On festivals he used to explain the Scriptures to them, but he would, even in school hours, turn occasionally from

a lesson to offer prayer, standing bent down, as if the sins of the school weighed him to the ground, then sinking to his knees, or lying flat upon the floor. He would cover his face with his hands in praying, lest anything earthly should disturb his attention from God. He would strive, while giving his boys doctrinal instruction, to impress upon them the need of holiness through the earnestness of his own spirit.

A very interesting account of John Cele is contained in the appendix to the *Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes*, by Thomas à Kempis—

“What order that is illustrious for its life or reputation hath not had monks that were his pupils? . . . For the pupils who were under his rule learned from their good master to despise for Christ’s sake the glory of the world that vanisheth away, and that in the whirlpool of this mortal life nothing is better and holier than to spurn the enticements of the world and to fight for the Lord of Heaven. In his days it was a lovely thing to enter the town of Zwolle and to see the chosen multitudes of scholars that did attend the school. Who could tell in worthy wise with what fatherly care he strove to instruct all in learning and character, and to the leading of an upright life, and the holding of a good repute? For this purpose he often set before them and quoted the authority of Holy Scripture, and strongly encouraged them to copy sentences from the writings of the Saints. . . . In process of time the fame of John Cele’s goodness went forth to the utmost parts of Germany.”

His influence spread among all classes in the town of Zwolle.

"All things," says à Kempis, "were well at Zwolle beneath his rule. They who governed the people feared God, and were endowed with wisdom and riches ; moreover amongst them were many learned magistrates who had been of old disciples of John, and, as was fitting, they ever held him in love and reverence."¹

He died in 1417.

It was a custom of the Brothers to explain the Bible to the school-boys in conversation or collations. The contempt of the world, and the importance of self-knowledge, self-discipline, and the following of Christ were strongly insisted on. In these they were noted for their persuasive and gentle address, "placabilis lingua"—"winning speech." This teaching appears to have been mainly given by them in the boarding-houses. Thomas à Kempis relates that, as a youth, he was present daily at their pious conferences, and was edified by their virtues and their gracious words.

"Never before could I recollect to have seen such men, so devout and fervent were they in the love of God and of their neighbour. Living in the world, they had no part in the life thereof, and seemed to take no heed to worldly affairs, being instant continually in sacred study and devout meditation." (À Kempis, *Lives of the Disciples of Florentius*, ch. i.)

But the spirit of the "moderna devotio" passed from the Brother-house, in greater or less degree, into the public school. The behaviour of the

¹ *Vide* the translation of the *Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes* by J. P. Arthur (Kegan Paul), 1906, p. 191, etc.

scholars, who were influenced by the Brothers, is noticed by Dier de Mudén, who tells us that "there was then among them a remarkable silence and discipline." How could it be otherwise than that the lives of the pious Brothers should make a deep impression on many of the scholars, and excite them to imitation? Yet there was another side to the matter: they were not all equally discreet, and the severe demands of entire unworldliness which they pressed upon youths, before whom the attractions of life were just opening, proved in some cases too much for human nature. In boys who had no vocation to rise so high this strain produced unreality, and led to hypocrisy, or to an excited and unstable self-surrender. Of this Erasmus, who was not devoutly inclined, was a notable instance in his young days, and in his later life he gave vent to a somewhat bitter condemnation of the forcing system adopted in the House. He was a boy of fifteen when he lodged with the Brothers at Deventer from 1474 onwards.

Erasmus himself was eventually persuaded to enter a monastery, for which he was quite unsuited, and he obtained leave to quit the cloister for the university. But a large number of the youths who had been boarded during the period of their school-days in the Brother-houses either entered a monastic order or became novices in the Brotherhoods, the following account appearing frequently in the records in more or less similar words (see Möbius, p. 36), "*factus est humilis frater, et Christi discipulus*," or "*postquam competenter litteratus videbatur, reliquit scholastica, se contulit plenissime ad spiritualia studia*." And again, "*completo scholastici studio receptus*

est in societatem domus Domini Florentii, reliquit regulas Alexandri et Donati, et intravit scholam cælestis exercitii"—

"He was made into a humble brother and a disciple of Christ," or "after he had been sufficiently educated he left the subjects of the schools, and gave himself very fully to spiritual studies." And again, "his studies in the schools being finished he was received into the society of the house of Florentius, and leaving the rules of Alexander¹ and Donatus,² he entered the training-school of the heavenly warfare."

SETTLEMENTS OF THE BROTHERS

A VERY long list is given by Schulze in the third edition of Herzog's *Encyklopädie* of the towns in the Netherlands, in Holland, and in Germany where Brother-houses were founded; and he shows that in

¹ Alexander de Villa Dei was the author of *Doctrinale Puerorum*. It was for some centuries the most common text-book on grammar, and was a compilation from Priscian, and in leonine verse. It retained its place to the sixteenth century. Alexander de Villa Dei lived in the thirteenth century, and was a Franciscan.

² Aelius Donatus was a Roman grammarian of the fourth century. The full title of his school-book is *Donatus de octibus partibus orationis*—"Donatus on the Eight Parts of Speech." In the Middle Ages it was in the early stages of printing published as a block-book before type came into use. In Holland block printing began early. It was sometimes called *Donatus pro puerilis*—"Donatus for Little Boys." Other school-books of an elementary character were afterwards called "donatus."

many cases the Brothers were invited to settle by the authorities of the towns with a view to their helping in the schools. It appears to be sufficient here to mention a few of these, where there is some special reason for doing so. Schulze gives the names of twenty-two towns in the Netherlands and Holland, and eighteen in Germany, where such settlements took place. He adds a sketch of the history of each.

Next to Deventer and Zwolle, Herzogenbusch was an important centre of their influence. The Brothers were invited to settle there in 1424. The town authorities allowed them to arrange the school as they thought fit. They included Greek as well as Latin in their plan, and also printed school-books. At one time the pupils in the school of this town numbered twelve hundred. Erasmus was taken away against his own will from the school of Hegius, and sent for three years to Herzogenbusch, to be educated and prepared for the monastic life, to which his guardians, after wasting his patrimony, intended to consign him. In his letters he depreciates the efficiency of the humanistic teaching there, but his judgment under his trying circumstances can hardly be accepted as impartial. At Groningen the establishment of a Brother-house appears to be due to the influence of John Wessel. This famous man had been educated in their school of Zwolle, and had remained their warm friend. (For the interesting personality of Wessel, *vide* Ullmann, *Reformatoren vor der Reformation*.) The Jesuits took over this school in 1616. At Liège, where there had been a school for some time, but where the Brothers had not at first been successful, they founded

a House dedicated to St. Jerome in 1496. The school rose to sixteen hundred scholars. They were divided, no doubt after the method of Hegius at Deventer, into eight classes, with twenty subdivisions of each. It proved highly successful. John Sturm, afterwards the distinguished Rector of the school at Strassburgh, was a pupil there. It fell into the hands of the Jesuits in 1581.

At Delft the town councillors applied in 1403 to the Rector at Deventer for Brothers who should work among the people. A House was founded, and in his youth the future Pope Adrian VI obtained his religious training there. At Gouda, owing to the opposition of the monks of Stein, who, as Erasmus relates, preferred beer and wine to study, a Brother-house could not be formed before 1462. The Brothers took charge of the Latin school, and established a library. John Standonck, afterwards Rector of the College of Montagu at Paris, was educated there. At Brussels the town authorities sent for some of the Brothers to assist in their schools in the year 1460, and they were provided with a house. Eventually they were opposed by the clergy.

It was not long before Gerard's efforts began to affect Germany. Henry von Ahaus was the founder of the three most important Houses in Germany.

1. At Münster, which was the head-quarters of humanism in Germany Ahaus and his highly-educated Brothers were in close connection with its school. The influence of the Reformation penetrated into the Brother-house.

2. At Cologne there was a successful establishment of Brothers, who distinguished themselves by the

promotion of the art of printing.¹ These were kindly treated at the time of the Reformation in 1543, when it was expressly laid down that the Brothers were not to be disturbed, because they had lived together of free will, kept school, and worked with their hands, and so late as 1657 their rules received fresh approbation from Pope Alexander VII. They were not suppressed till the French occupation of 1802.

3. The House at Wesel, founded by Ahaus, lasted on to 1726. Emmerich had a remarkable Brother-house, of which the reputation was almost equal to that of Deventer, and a successful school and boarding-house, and also a guest house called "Xenodochium," for poor students. This Brother-house lasted till suppressed by Napoleon in 1811.

Trier.—Being opposed by the friars, they were honoured by the people and called the "golden priests." One of the scholars educated here was Caspar Olevianus ; he favoured the Reformation, and by his preaching the Gospel to the people as the only source of comfort in life and in death, the Reformation took firm hold.

Herford.—Montanus von Speier, a pupil of Hegius, was one of the learned Brothers here, and became a friend of Melancthon. He took up the Reformation, and such was the influence of his learning and character, that (1525) the Brother-house and the Sister-house, and also some of the Augustinian canons, followed him. Luther was acquainted with this Brotherhood, and highly approved of them, and wished

¹ See Appendix A.

there were more such Houses. The number however fell off, though it remained a Lutheran Brother-house till the year 1841.¹

Marburg.—On the occasion of a meeting of clergy, held January 23rd, 1528, the Brothers of the Common Life in this town, and the Dominicans, declared themselves in favour of the Reformation, while the Franciscans and others were against it. Into Württemberg the Brothers were introduced by Count Eberhard I (1459-96).

At Rostock the Brothers were remarkable for the beauty of their writing and of their printing. In 1526 they printed an edition of the New Testament in Danish and Latin.

In Culm in Prussia important scholastic foundations had been established. To assist these some priests who were Brothers of the Common Life were sent for from Zwolle, by the advice of a citizen who had been educated there. The result of this invitation was that three Brothers of vigorous character were sent, it being felt that a distant land was all the more in need of help; one of these is described as "utilis et grossus ad juvenum regimen in Prussia applicatus"—"helpful and powerful in exercising rule over youths." Hildersheim appears also to have contributed some Brothers. The Bishop gave his consent in 1473 to the "honorabiles et discreti fratres de Suollis" for a "studium particulare" and exemption from taxes, with the consent of Casimir, King of Poland. The Brothers were opposed by the clergy and monks, but they answered the expectations of the citizens, as

¹ See this treated at greater length by Ullmann, *Reformatoren*, Vol. II, p. 258.

appears from the archives of 1489, in which the city council enlarged their privileges. But lasting success did not attend the House and School, and when the House was given up the School was otherwise carried on.

CHAPTER VI

THE RELATION OF THE BROTHERS TO HUMANISM

IT has been noticed that the Brothers were willing to teach in boarding-houses, or hostels connected with schools, for the sake of exercising an influence of a religious kind upon the young. They must in consequence have had some hand in teaching Latin, as that was the language both of the Church service and of all such scholarship as then existed. Moreover it was the custom in the schools themselves to retain some of the senior youths, among whom there would certainly be Brothers, or candidates for the Brotherhood, as "lectores" or assistant teachers.

Such teaching must be assumed to have gone on for some time before the first recorded instance of definite classical work on the part of a master who was also a prominent Brother. In the middle of the fifteenth century Lambert de Tyleta joined the Brothers in Deventer, in order to instruct in "scholasticilibus et bonis moribus"—"in scholarship and good conduct." (*Vide* Möbius, p. 39.) This instruction appears to have been given in the boarding-house of the scholars. Lambert, however, kept secular teaching in its right place, and so tenderly anxious was he rightly to form the characters of his

boys, that his early death at the age of forty, after sixteen years of work, was ascribed to his extreme anxiety for their highest welfare.¹ It is the opinion of Möbius that the occasional closing of the public schools, owing to the plague, led to more of general instruction being given by the Brothers in the boarding-houses. It appears that they were gradually led on to show more interest in the classics, indeed it would otherwise be difficult to explain the dedication, already referred to, of one of their boarding-houses to "Musarum alumnis."²

These considerations bring us to the interesting question of how far the Brothers became affected by the introduction of the humanistic studies. The reader will bear in mind that at this period one of the greatest changes recorded in history was coming over the education and the studies of scholars. Great opportunities were at hand for the revived study of Greek, which, though current in the early ages of Christianity, had since been dropped in the West.

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 was to occasion the transfer to Italy of many of the Greek manuscripts of the classics, carried thither by the refugees. The revival of Greek had indeed previously begun. Petrarch led the way, though it seems that he was not personally a Greek scholar. The learned Barlaam, born in Calabria, where some knowledge of Greek had lingered among the monks, introduced

¹ For an account of Lambert, see the translations from Dumbbar's *Analecta*.

² Professor Woodward is doubtless right when he says, "The relation of the Brother-house to the School must have differed in various cities." In some the Brothers were helpers in organizing, in others only teachers of religion in their houses.

Petrarch to the originals of the poems of Homer; Boccaccio acquired some slight knowledge of Greek from Leo, a disciple of Barlaam, and translated from his renderings the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. It was on the arrival of Manuel Chrysoloras in Italy in 1396 that a systematic study of Greek took its rise.

The fall of Constantinople undoubtedly gave a great impulse to the new movement through the classical writings which were saved and borne to Italy. The shock given to Western Europe by the disastrous news tended to excite the interest of Western scholars in all that had been saved from the wreck of the East. Under the influence of the age of the Renaissance, the old scholastic philosophy, which had degenerated into quibbles of words, was to give way before a wider culture, that dealt with the realities of human nature, and was to reveal its abiding characteristics through the medium of the great writers of antiquity. What was the attitude of the Brothers of the Common Life to these pursuits? Gerard and Florentius, though men of education themselves, had regarded all things as loss compared with the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord, and had not encouraged the study of secular learning, nor did they approve of their disciples going up to universities, lest they should become worldly. We can readily sympathize with this earnest consecration to spiritual aims, but when far wider fields of knowledge were opened out by the humanists than were available to mediæval students, the question assumed a different aspect; fruitful and beneficial results might reasonably be expected, and vigorous teachers,

such as Agricola and Melancthon, argued with effect that the revived classics of Greece were helpful towards a high moral character in the training of youth. At the present time among ourselves there seems little danger that our young men will be tempted to indulge in too much study; in all classes mere amusement is the fashionable idol, and there is little fear of the danger dreaded by the Brothers that the Muses should be unduly worshipped. They themselves after a while felt the value of the newly-recovered knowledge.

While the spirit of the Brothers was at first antagonistic to the spirit of the Renaissance, they were, in not a few cases, led on to give attention to the humanistic studies, and even to take part in them in school instruction. Some few particulars as to how this came about will now be in place. Alexander Hegius, Rector of the School at Deventer from 1474 to 1498, who had previously taught at Wesel and Emmerich, is one of the most conspicuous scholastic figures of his day. He was not a Brother, but was in close sympathy with the Brothers, at the same time he felt no prejudice against the new learning, and became himself a student of the Greek language. Synthis, however, who acted under him, was a Brother, and a distinguished student and scholar. Hegius began the study of Greek under Rudolph Agricola, a notable humanist who had lately returned from Italy, and who was a native of Holland, having been born near Groningen. Erasmus, when a boy under Hegius, learnt the elements of Greek, and in after-life describes the education as barbarous before these

improvements set in, and we gather from his words that Hegius and his true helpmeet, Synthis, began to offer "*aliquid melioris literaturæ*"—"something of better literature"—to their scholars. From Hegius himself we learn that from his younger friend, Agricola, he became aware of the barbarous character of mediæval Latin, and acquired a knowledge of pure Latinity and of the Greek language. To these strenuous efforts to acquire and teach the best available learning of the day Hegius added the influence of a noble character. He was strict as to discipline and morals, and combined with scholastic width of thought the devoutness that he welcomed among the Brothers of the Common Life. In advanced years he took priest's orders. He wrote to a friend, "All knowledge is damaging that tends to injure moral vigour," and he encouraged his young men to carry the learning they had acquired into the life of the cloister. Several of the Brothers assisted Hegius in the instruction of the school, and some acquired a knowledge of Greek, one of them, Henry of Amersfoort, published a Greek vocabulary as well as Latin books, but concealed his authorship from motives of humility.

Towards the close of the fifteenth century we can point to the active participation of several Brothers in the School of Emmerich. A Brother, named Gilbert von Kalkar, taught Greek there. Jacob Siberti, before he entered a monastery, resided in the Brother-house of Emmerich, and was "lector" at the School. He is described as "*purioris Romanæ linguæ omnisque antiquitatis indagator solertissimus*"—"a most skilled investigator of the purer

forms of Latin, and of the whole of antiquity." At the same time he was author of writings for spiritual edification: *De utilitate silentii*, *De commendatione humilitatis*, etc.—"Of the Value of Silence," "Of the Praise of Humility," etc. The "moderna devotio" took great hold of this school, which was noted for the influence of its religious instruction. In the School at Marburg a Brother named Henry Geck is described as well trained in both the liberal arts and in spiritual learning.

Since most of this chapter on education was put together the writer has become acquainted with the remarkable work of Professor Woodward of the University of Liverpool, *Education in the Age of the Renaissance*, Cambridge Press, 1906. Several valuable particulars have now been added, for which due obligation is hereby expressed. Chapter v gives an interesting sketch of Rudolph Agricola, and of his efforts on his return from Italy to improve the education current in Germany (1444-85). In the same chapter the work of the Brothers is noticed in their connection with the public schools of towns. Professor Woodward rightly remarks that the description of the schools formerly usual with English writers as "schools of the Brothers" is inaccurate. The schools were for the most part already town schools. In many places the influence of the Brothers was exercised through the religious teaching given to boarders in their Houses, in some they were invited by the Town Councils to organize the schools themselves. Their work in either case usually led to a large increase of the numbers.

Professor Woodward informs us that the subjects

taught in the schools were those of the earlier studies of the universities, called "Trivium." This consisted of Grammar, Dialectics, and Rhetoric. Grammar included some of the Latin classics. Rhetoric was taught from the writings of Cicero. Dialectic was based on Logic, and this was founded on Porphyry and Boethius.

CHAPTER VII

MONASTERIES OF THE 'MODERNA DEVOTIO'

GRUBE, himself a Roman Catholic writer, describes the decadence into which not a few monasteries had fallen. Some Benedictine monasteries had become a refuge for the sons of noblemen, and others for the sons of burghers. Parents found it a great convenience to be able to dispose of their superfluous sons and daughters in this way, and they supported them by annual payments or other contributions. Young people who were not suitable for life in the world owing to bodily or mental deficiencies, or whom for any other reason their families wished to get rid of, were sent into these monasteries. This abuse changed the homes of devotion into boarding-houses of social convenience; and at the same time tended to destroy the community of goods.

Groot makes similar complaints of the nunneries. Money had to be paid, so that unless wealthy, the pious, the clever, the efficient were excluded. Poverty was now despised in convents, in which the love of poverty should be the true ideal. That the system existed widely and continued long is shown by the remarkable history of Mère Angelique in the days of Richelieu, when that excellent abbess

endeavoured to reform it, after being one of its victims in early life. The monasteries referred to by Grube were chiefly in Saxony, but it is obvious from the complaints of Groot that similar abuses were prevalent in the Netherlands, and in one of his letters to a young novice he begs him not to be irritated into condemning monks who held revenues of their own, instead of throwing them into a common fund, because as a young man he should not criticize the faults of others.

Such being the condition of monastic decadence in the time of Groot and Florentius, we can easily understand the importance of establishing some new monastic houses on the model of the ancient devotion; which they accordingly did. It is, however, only fair to add that some orders, such as the Carthusian, had remained free from degradation.

MONASTERIES FOUNDED BY THE 'MODERNA DEVOTIO' AND OF THE AUGUSTINIAN ORDER

WHILE the Brothers of the Common Life sought to advance the spirit of devotion in the outer world, the work of the Canons Regular showed itself mainly in the direction of promoting the reform of monasteries. Two years after Gerard's death, Florentius carried out a project that had been dear to his master by founding at Windesheim a monastery of Canons Regular, with this object in view, and as a central institution for the Brothers of the Common Life. A *Chronicle of Windesheim*, frequently referred to in these pages, was written by Busch, who was born at

Zwolle in 1399, and educated in the town school under the well-known school-master, John Cele. Busch became a monk at Windesheim in 1417. In writing his *Chronicle* he had before him the letters of Gerard and of Florentius, and such archives of the monastery as already existed. But his chief sources of information were his own observation, and the oral particulars given him by the older monks. For the study of the later Middle Ages and of the new revival of its monastic life, his work is of much value. He also wrote the lives of twenty-four of the monks, as well as four books on the reformation of monasteries. These writings of Busch have been edited by Grube in the Records of the Province of Saxony, with the title, *Chronicon Windeshemense*, by John Busch, and *Liber de Reformatione Monasteriorum*. (Halle, 1886.)

Busch himself took an effective part in the movement for the reform of the older monasteries that had fallen away from their ideals.

A notable piece of literary labour carried out by the monks of Windesheim is described by Busch (ch. xxvi, *Chronicle of Windesheim*). It was a revision of the text of the Vulgate.

"They endeavoured," he remarks, "to restore all the genuine books of the Old and New Testaments to the original form of the Latin translation, which St. Jerome had made from the Hebrew; they sought for the most accurate copies they could obtain and gathered together various MSS. from the libraries of divers dioceses and monasteries. Among these were three or four great volumes of the whole Bible written long ago in the ancient script, and they came from Paris, from Bethlehem near Dolinchern, the house of the Brothers of St. John of Jerusalem, and other places.

From these sources they restored many of the ancient readings, in place of others that had erroneously been in common use. These labours occupied many years, and when the revision was completed it was gladly accepted by the General Chapter of the Order."

This revision of the Vulgate was helpful to the eventual settlement of the text by ecclesiastical authorization.

The monastery of Mount St. Agnes, near Zwolle, took its rise in the following manner. The *Chronicle* of it written by Thomas à Kempis, whose monastic life was spent there, still exists, and begins with an account of the circumstances of its origin. The previous name of the site had been Mount Nemel; it was about an hour's walk from Zwolle. In this town some disciples of Groot, while he was still alive, had formed a Brother-house, John de Ummen being Rector of it. Wishing, however, to live more retired, they choose, on the occasion of a visit from Gerard, a fresh spot on Mount Nemel. The site was transferred and the building begun in 1386, a year and a half after Gerard's death. This was only a Brother-house, and a small one, and we have an instance of the Brothers being free to leave it, as the rule was, in an expostulation addressed to some of them by good old John de Ummen. A most interesting account of the life of this simple Brotherhood is given by à Kempis. (*Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes*, ch. ii, iii, and iv.)

Leave was given for the foundation of the monastery, in place of the Brother-house, by Blanckenheim, Bishop of Utrecht, in 1398, but owing to the opposition of the citizens of Zwolle it was at first

located at Westerhof. Subsequently, however, the Bishop enabled the monks to return to Mount St. Agnes. Their first Prior was appointed in 1399. He was John of Kempen, the elder brother of Thomas à Kempis, he came from the monastery of Windesheim, and was Prior of St. Agnes for nine years. Thomas à Kempis, in the same year that his brother was appointed Prior, having completed his education at Deventer, became a novice at Mount St. Agnes, and in 1406 was invested as a monk. The church of the monastery of St. Agnes was consecrated in 1412.

In the fifteenth chapter of the *Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes* an interesting account is given of John de Ummen, who had been Superior of the Brother-house near Zwolle, before it became a monastery. He had been blind from early years, and his pious mother used to take him with her on pilgrimages. But when he had heard Groot he gave up pilgrimages,¹ separated himself from the world, sought to serve God in quietude, and exhorted all who came to him to renounce worldly desires, and to take up a new life in Christ, such as Master Groot had taught by his own holy walk. On the establishment of the monastery, he founded a new Brother-house at Vollenhoe, and died at the age of seventy while visiting the Sisters at Almel.

In connection with the central monastery at Windesheim, others were founded at Arnhem, Horn,

¹ "Often in looking after such memorials (of Saints) people are moved by curiosity, and the novelty of fresh sights, whilst little or no fruit of amendment is carried home."—*Imitatio*, Book on Holy Communion.

and Emstein, and subsequently at Amsterdam and Northorn. The founder of the last was Everard, a notable friend of Gerard Groot, and an account of him is given by à Kempis in his appendix to his *Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes* (No. 12). Everard of Eza was a distinguished physician honoured far and wide. His skill and talents had rendered him self-sufficient, he was "puffed up," says à Kempis, "with worldly wisdom," and hearing of the fame of Gerard as a preacher he went to listen to him, not out of good-will, but from curiosity, in the hope of catching him out in his speech. With this intention he concealed himself behind a pillar ;

"but," continues à Kempis, "Almighty God Who knoweth the hearts, and from Whose Face no one is able to hide, filled the quiver of the preacher with sharp arrows, and these pierced through the heart of the hidden and conceited listener, and so wounded and convicted him, that he laid aside his pride and vanity, and became a pious disciple."

For when the sermon was ended, he went to the man of God and opened to him what the Lord had done to him through his sermon, and how he had by his fiery words lighted up all the hidden depths of his heart, and had seen through all its secrets. Master Gerard welcomed him with friendliness, and lovingly strengthened him, and Everard became a companion and helper to him in his preaching. Yet it was not long after his conversion that Gerard departed to the Lord. Then Everard desired to join himself to the disciples and begged Florentius and the Brothers to assign him a cell in their House. At first they were suspicious of some evil design, but they eventually

agreed to receive him. Becoming enlightened in the law of the Lord, and in Holy Scripture, as he had been before in the knowledge of medicine, he desired to follow the example of Florentius, and therefore gathered together pious clerics and laymen into his House at Almel, and dwelt with them many years in good discipline. And in order that those whom he had thus guided might not be scattered at his death, he found a site for a monastery, and gave all that was necessary for its establishment.

Moreover Everard made good use of his skill as a doctor among his saintly friends. For long he watched over the frail health of Florentius, and remarked regarding him that he could not have lived on but for the especial Providence of God. To Thomas à Kempis as a boy he was most kind, and the latter ends the account of him by adding—

“He was buried in his church at Almel, where for many years he had presided over his people, and he left a good memory behind him with the pious ones, whom he had loved and cherished as a father. While I was still studying at Deventer and lay ill, he was the means of healing me so thoroughly that for a long time after I was never attacked by similar ailments.”

Dier de Mudén gives a further account of Everard's care of the sick (Dumbar, *Analecta*, Vol. I, p. 62).

“Often in the time of Florentius the Brothers in Deventer were taken ill from their too great asceticism, and because Master Everard was a physician, they were sent to him by Florentius that they might be restored to health both in body and spirit. Everard used to put them to rural work, and carried out their cure both in spiritual

and in bodily respects. Then he sent them back revived to Florentius."

The monks of Windesheim, no less than the Brothers at Deventer, seriously injured themselves at first by excessive abstinence from adequate nourishment. Two of them are related to have lost their reason in consequence. After this misfortune it was decided that, for the preservation of their order, the monks must eat well in future, and obey commands from their superior as to taking a proper amount of food. It was also ordained that every cleric, who desired to join their religious order, should be asked three questions: whether he could eat well, whether he could sleep well, and whether he would yield willing obedience.

A list of the monasteries in Holland which became associated with Windesheim is given in Busch, ed. Grube, pp. 348-56.

Thomas à Kempis continued during his life as a monk of Mount St. Agnes near Zwolle, writing the *Chronicle* of that monastery. It is in his simple, graphic style, and is remarkable for the sympathetic manner in which he touches upon the deaths of the successive members of the Society, always relating, where he can, some interesting characteristics of their life and work, with impartial praise, whether they were priests, clerics, or servants in the monastery. The charm of his own devout character comes out unconsciously to himself in the pages in which he records the virtues of others. It may be interesting to the reader to see the last passage of the *Chronicle*, written by à Kempis before his death—

"In the year of our Lord 1471, on the festival of the Holy Confessor St. Antony, died the pious layman Gerlacus, born at Dese near Zwolle, at the age of about seventy-two. For more than fifty-three years he dwelt among us in great humility, simplicity, and patience, and had endured many labours, necessities and tribulations. Among his other virtues he was pre-eminent among the brethren for his strict silence; for he spoke very little the whole day long, and even when work was being carried on he was an example of silence. A little while before he died he was afflicted with a stroke, and lost his reason at the same time. He was buried in our churchyard near the other laymen."

The unknown chronicler who succeeded Thomas à Kempis thus refers to his death, in the next entry—

"In the same year (1471) on the festival of St. James the Less, after compline, died our much-loved brother, Thomas Hemerken, born at Kempen, a town in the diocese of Cologne, in the ninety-second year of his age, the sixty-third of his investiture, and the fiftieth of his priesthood. In his young days he had been a hearer of the Master Florentius at Deventer, and had been sent on by him to his own brother, who was then Prior at Mount St. Agnes. He was at that time twenty-two years old, and was invested after a noviciate of six years. In the early days of his monastic life he went through many necessities, temptations and labours. Also he wrote the whole of our Bible, and many other books for our House and for sale. Besides this he himself composed some little books for the edification of the youths in suitable and simple style; but very weighty and impressive in substance. He had a very loving devotion to the suffering Saviour, and he possessed the gift of consoling the tempted and sad. At last when he became

very old he was troubled with dropsy in the legs, and fell asleep happily in the Lord. He was buried in the eastern vault by the side of brother Herbolt."

The adoption of the Augustinian Order for the monasteries of the "moderna devotio" was followed by the consideration of suitable statutes based on the rule of St. Augustine. This subject is dealt with in Chapter xxiv of the *Chronicle* of Busch (ed. Grube, p. 308). He states

"that much consideration was given by the Brothers at Windesheim to the drawing up of their regulations, the foundation of these being the usual obligation of poverty, chastity, and obedience. With regard to the statutes based on these principles, the Brothers consulted what had been laid down in records of old days, and comparing the various regulations together, they chose out what appeared suitable to the purposes of the modern devotion. They did not confine themselves to the practices of the Augustinians alone, but took suggestions also from the customs of other orders, especially the Carthusians. When they had formed those rules they did not at once establish them, but gave themselves time to test them by experience."

These statutes were finally decided upon at a general chapter of the monasteries that had been erected, or had joined the reformed order, which chapter was held at Windesheim in 1402. The monasteries so united under the headship of Windesheim were at that time Emsteyn, Arnhem, Horn, Mount St. Agnes near Zwolle, and those of Amsterdam and Northorn.

Kettlewell tells us (p. 173, 2nd ed.) that what was called the rule of St. Augustine as observed by

the Brethren of Mount St. Agnes, and which they were enjoined to read over once a week, may be briefly summed up under the following heads—

I. To observe the fundamental law of Love : first, towards God, then towards our neighbour, according to its just extent, and to imitate the example of the Mother Church of Jerusalem in union of heart, and in sharing with others the goods we possess.

II. To learn the lesson of Humility, according to the most perfect pattern set forth in the life of Christ, and in that of His nearest and most faithful followers ; and especially in this, that the greatest among them should be as the younger, and he that is chief as he that doth serve.

III. To observe carefully the stated or canonical "hours" and times of prayer ; and to prepare both body and soul for it by due retirement, meditation, and fasting.

IV. To take care that the soul and body be both fed at the same time, by a prudent appointment of some spiritual entertainment at meals, as by reading some sacred book, or by a conference on holy matters, or by singing some devout songs or canticles.

V. To take charge of the sick and infirm wherever they be found, and so far as we are capable, and to do them all the service in our power for their bodily and spiritual welfare.

VI. To be without any affectation or singularity in dress, and in all the other externals of life ; and to regard above all things the acquisition of internal purity and the fashioning our lives into a conformity to the will of God.

VII. Humbly and affectionately to give and receive fraternal correction and admonition from one another, meekly to confess our faults one to another, gladly to submit ourselves to the reproof or chastisement of our Superior, and resolutely keep up the true discipline of the Gospel.

VIII. To do all we possibly can for the general good and interest of the Community ; to be diligent in our duties and callings, never to be idle, or to wander curiously about, and to be content with the distribution of the common funds, though not altogether so favourable to ourselves as might be expected.

IX. Not to neglect outward cleanliness and decency, but to look to the due discharge of outward things for the sake of the inward ; and to take proper care of the body for the sake of the soul, both in health and sickness.

X. To be obedient to our Superior for God's sake, to faithfully and kindly observe our relative duties towards the other members of the Society, to be ready to ask pardon, and to forgive offences in the spirit of Christ our Lord, but not so as to weaken authority.

Here we have the sum and substance of the rule by which Thomas à Kempis and his Brethren at Mount St. Agnes strove to regulate their lives. Nor can it be doubted that these same principles guided the Brothers of the Common Life, though no vows were taken in their Houses.

CHAPTER VIII

SISTER-HOUSES

(A complete list is given in Herzog, *Real Encyclopædie*, 3rd edition, Schulze, p. 498.)

BEFORE the erection of the first Brother-house Groot had already founded a Sister-house, by giving over in 1374 his own roomy abode to the magistrates of Deventer, to be used as a dwelling for poor maidens or widows. It did not prosper, however, after his death, the seventeen women it contained not duly following the directions of their spiritual guide, John Gronde. It was not until it came, in 1393, under the direction of John Brinckerinck, that fresh life was infused. A Kempis, in his memoir of this holy man, remarks that, when placed in charge of the Sisterhood—

“Being a man of power and a zealous lover of chastity, he ruled the House with all strictness, not sparing himself toil, but often wearying himself beyond his strength in his efforts to gain souls. . . . But when the number of the handmaids of God began to be increased, John, putting his trust in the help of the Most High, built a larger house for them to dwell in, that he might save more souls of them who fled to Christ from the turmoil of the world. At length by

great labour he built a large convent for devout women outside the city towards the north, in which he received certain Sisters from Gerard's House, and caused them to be imbued with holy learning, and to be invested in the habit of Regulars under perpetual vows. These Sisters, and those also who remained in the city, he ruled strictly for the remaining twenty-six years of his life, the Lord helping him, but some he sent to other places to establish new communities. In the beginning he found only sixteen Sisters living in the community, but at his death he left one hundred and fifty, for God multiplied their numbers in his days. (*Vide à Kempis, Vita Brinck, 4.*)

Groot had forbidden vows being required in those Houses, but of course he would not disapprove of the Sisters, as they often did, going on to join a nunnery of the reformed Order of Windesheim. Some of them became tertiaries of St. Francis. But the life of the Sister-houses, combining devotion with labour, soon presented a marked contrast to the degenerate condition of the older nunneries. In addition to such usual characteristics as obedience to the superiors and heartfelt humility and kindness towards each other, activity in household duties was required, especially in the menial and unpleasant ones. Besides these, and spinning and sewing, the Sisters tended the sick or taught girls. In one of the six Houses of Zwolle the Sisters instructed the children of the town in manual labour. Some did miniature painting, or copied books. "The rapid spread of these Sisterhoods," says Schulze, "was a proof that they supplied a felt need, and showed how powerful was the spirit of the 'moderna devotio.'"

The dress of the Sisters was grey. The Sister

Superior was called "Martha," or "Mother," or "Rectoress." With the name "Martha" it is interesting to compare an encomium passed by à Kempis on the labour and cares of Martha.¹ In the earlier half of the fifteenth century there were at least eighty-seven of these Sisterhoods, of which the greater part were situated in the Netherlands. But there were a good many in Germany, for Vorniken (quoted by Acquoy, 3, 292) remarks, "Where is there a place where there is not a Sister-house of the devout?"

An instance of how these Sisters sometimes passed on to taking the vows of the Order of St. Augustine is given in an appendix to the *Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes*, by à Kempis (No. 14). He says—

"In the year 1408 the first investment of nuns took place at Dierpenvene near Deventer. The ceremony was carried out by Brother John Huesden, the honoured Prior of Windesheim, in the presence of the Prior of St. Mary Brunn near Arnheim, and of Brother John à Kempis, Priest of Mount St. Agnes, and many other persons of both sexes, who assembled themselves with sacred fervour at this festival day. There was great rejoicing at the celebration of the heavenly nuptials of many noble matrons and maidens, and abundant tears were poured out in spiritual aspirations. There were twelve who took the garb of the Rule of St. Augustine, three of whom were vowed on the same day, while the others gave themselves to a novitiate of a year. Several of these Sisters were chosen and received from the House of Master Groot at Deventer, where their number had increased and John Brinckerinck was for a long time their guide and teacher."

¹ *De Fideli Dispensatore*, ch. i, Opera Thomæ à Kempis (Sommalius). Appendix C.

Some of the relatives were doubtless lamenting the loss of those who left them for the seclusion of a convent. Nor can it be denied that an excessive value was set on celibacy by the promoters of these monasteries. Father William Vorniken in a tractate concerning Windesheim, and on the monastic movement connected with it, speaks of the maidens that joined convents, saying, "There was a vast band of women that were virgins who despised the thought of motherhood and spurned this flowery world with contempt." It is fair to notice this excess of zeal, as it casts a dark shadow over a movement otherwise good, and depreciates the sacredness of family life, though ordained of God.

BRINCKERINCK

A FEW words may here be added about Brinckerinck. Thomas à Kempis has given us only a short life of him, but it can be supplemented from other sources. He is related to have been most careful in his bearing towards the Sisters, and when he visited a sick one to hear her confession he would place himself with his back to her. He sternly discouraged any symptoms of vanity, and a Sister who had received a present of a pair of shoes which were prettier than the usual ones, and asked if she might wear them, received the reply, "Round your throat."

His sermons made such an impression that the hearers felt that before preaching to them he had been sitting at Jesus' feet. Eight collations, put together from his addresses to the Sisterhood, have

been edited by Moll, 1866. Among the exhortations contained in these are the following, that—

“They should desire to be of no reputation, and rather wish to be ruled than to rule.”

“Also that they should constantly abide in contrition of heart, and discipline the body by severe external labour.”

“Thou who art Christ’s maiden, embrace with all thy heart the victory of the Cross, and prepare thyself day and night for the works of God.”

“Enfold in thine heart the footprints of Jesus Christ, for it well befits that the bride should follow her Bridegroom in sufferings, grief, and temptations, for as blessedness draws near so does also temptation. Therefore be strong in spirit, in all work and disappointment, as a good knight of Christ.”

Of more general application to Christian life, the following words may be quoted—

“The more we ascribe to our dear Lord the more we have, and the more we ascribe to ourselves the more we lose, for He has said Himself, ‘Without Me ye can do nothing.’”

“We should take blame, as if our dear Lord had sent us a little love-letter, to warn us as to what displeases Him in us.”

“He is preparing for hell who does anything against his conscience.”

“We must keep our evil deeds before us, and punish them, and then it will be as if He said to us, ‘If your sins are before you, then they are behind Me.’”

The sense of forgiveness is to be given spiritually,
for

“the Holy Ghost is to speak to our hearts, and tell us that our sins are forgiven.”

Again—

“No man receives the Grace of God to his blessedness who is unthankful.”

Also a saying that is in harmony with mysticism—

“Our dear Lord has given to each man a spark from His own soul, that shows us what is good and what is evil, and through our reason He speaks to our soul; the good shalt thou do, the evil shalt thou avoid. That is the true devotion and humble and fervent longing for God, and all things that are His. The devout soul should have our dear Lord present in all his thoughts and words and deeds.”

CHAPTER IX

THE BROTHERS AND THE REFORMATION

IT will be obvious from what has been already said that the Brothers would not be favourable to the new views, and the repudiation of Papal authority implied in the Lutheran Reformation. Gerard had been absolutely faithful to the doctrines of the Roman Church, and his followers would naturally regard any departure from these as heresy.

What then was the influence of the Reformation on the Brothers? A chronicler of the years 1521-29, in Doesburg, is quoted by Moll (*Kerch. Arch.*, iii, p. 109). This writer quaintly expresses his surprise at such unheard-of presumption as that of Luther, but ends by acknowledging that he seems backed by Scripture. He remarks—

“With Martin Luther many teachers have arisen, who have made bold to teach a multitude of new and unheard-of things in the Church. They allege that the Pope cannot coerce any one to obedience by the threat of mortal sin; that people cannot be bound to penance or to fasting, or avoidance of flesh-meats, or the keeping of festivals; that a priest may marry, in accordance with evangelic and apostolic freedom; that only one Mass a day in every town is permissible; that all men are priests, and can consecrate one

of their number whenever there are three men present. Many other things are introduced into the Church of God by the learned of our time, with the confident assurance that they can establish all they teach from Holy Scripture. The whole of Christendom seems divided into two Churches and Schools, a Lutheran and a Roman, and what is the most surprising is that all important teachers are following the new teaching of the present day. All judgments of the Fathers, Councils, Bishops, Theological Summarists, and Canonists, are rejected, in short anything that is not proven by the Holy Scriptures of the Evangelists and Apostles, so that no one can be pledged by human appointment. How far these teachings may extend, and what is yet to come, no one knows. God can turn even perverted views to good. Great changes are coming in the Church. Some regard Luther as a heretic, yet he seems to adhere to the sacred page of Scripture."

Here we find a Brother who wishes to take a candid view, and it clearly appears that careful reflection led a good many individuals among the Brotherhoods to pass over to the reformed opinions. This brought in an element of division, and occasioned secessions from the Houses. Usually the majority adhered to the old beliefs, but we have noticed that in the case of Herford a whole Brother-house went over, and so it happened also in Marburg.

An entirely opposite cause coming from the Roman side favoured the decline of the Societies of the Common Life. The spiritual earnestness fostered by the Lutheran Reformation began to put even the Roman authorities on their mettle. It was discovered by the Papal advisers that the spectacle of heretics being burnt alive was not successful in

making the lookers-on into spiritually-minded Christians. Something more was wanted. Search was therefore made for holy men, who should appeal to the heart and conscience, and yet know how to press the claims of Roman authority. Hence arose what is known as the "Counter-Reformation," which made considerable progress in Germany. The Jesuits were its strongest, ablest, and most militant representatives. Religious education passed from the Brotherhoods, to a large extent, into their hands. Damaged by the Reformation, superseded by the Jesuits, the Brothers fell into the background. Some of their Houses lingered on till suppressed by Napoleon ; but the times had changed, the Brothers had done a great and honourable work, and might pass away to the reward stored up elsewhere for all faithful Christian labour.

CHAPTER X

TRANSLATIONS FROM DUMBAR'S 'ANALECTA'

(These translations are given with a view to present to the reader some of the early records of the Brotherhood, which have not before been available in the English language. They appear in an abbreviated form, but no portions needed for historical accuracy are omitted.)

THE full title of Dumbar's *Analecta* is as follows—

Gerhardi Dumbar; Reipublicæ Daventriensis ab Actis Analecta, seu vetera aliquot scripta inedita, ab ipso publici juris facta. Daventriæ apud Johannem van Wyk, 1719.

On the title-page to the first volume a list of the writings printed in that volume is added. Rendered into English this reads as follows—

1. A writing by Dier de Mudén, about Master Groot, Florentius, and other Brothers of the Devotion.
2. Continuation of this by Peter Hoorn.
3. Life of Peter Hoorn, by Albert Lubeck.
4. Life of Egbert ter Beck, anonymous.
5. Life of John Hatten, by Peter of Utrecht and Gerard de Busco.

6. A Register of the goods of the House of Florentius, that were bought by the Brothers out of their own means.

The other subjects do not refer to the Brothers.

Extracts from *Dier de Mudén*, Dumbar's *Analecta*, Vol. I.

At page 26 we have a valuable instance of the importance attached to the "moderna devotio" as regards the reformation of monasteries. A certain penitent being anxious to visit Rome to receive absolution at head-quarters, instead of in Holland, sold his Breviary, of which he had made diligent use, to defray the expenses of his journey. On arriving there, he confessed his sins fully, and without concealment, begging for absolution. He was told that if he would enter the Order that was esteemed the highest, namely, the Order of the Friars Minor, he could be absolved. But he, knowing that none of the monasteries of the Minorites had yet been reformed, answered with trembling that he would gladly amend his life, but he was not prepared to enter the Order of the Minorites, and so this determined man returned to Deventer unabsolved.

We have the opinion given us of Amilius, who succeeded Florentius as Rector of the Brothers of Deventer, as to the relative status of the Regulars and the Brothers without vows: "Though the Church holds the condition of monks to be the more perfect, yet if any one lives perfectly in a humble condition, he will receive the reward of a perfect man."

Werenbord, Rector of the Sisters of St. Cecilia in Utrecht, who went about doing many good works, when asked, "Why do you tire yourself with such

great labours?" replied, "If I had two bodies I would use them up in the service of God." This answer renders all the more emphatic the observations of Werenbord recorded in page 69, etc., in which he remonstrated with the Brothers at Deventer on their too severe asceticism. "After several of our Brothers had died of phthisis, Werenbord, sitting among the Brothers, remarked, 'from all that I have gathered I do not think you make your arrangements well, for you die young.'" Our Brothers, giving heed to what he said, moderated their exercises. They used to rise at the third hour in the morning, after this remark they rested till the fourth, going to bed at nine instead of eight. They had been in the habit of writing for four hours before dinner, from that time forward they wrote for three hours, and they also returned to wearing linen shirts instead of woollen ones, and subsequently fewer died of phthisis.

PETER DE GRODA

IN the year 1441, on the day of Sixtus Pope and Martyr, died our beloved Brother Peter de Groda, presbyter, who in his time was a column of our House; a man of good counsel and judicious, not obstinate in his own opinion, but a man of peace and concord, ready to undergo any inconvenience for the sake of his obedience, which he showed in action at the time of our being driven out of Deventer, for when we sent him to Deventer to take charge of our House he endured many troubles and privations for six years and more. Towards the close of his life

he was appointed to rule the scholars of the Devotion living in the Nova Domus, and dwelt with them humbly; patiently bearing with their ways, and anxiously taking charge of them, without sparing himself in any labours whatever, even hard and menial ones, as indeed had been his wont through life. He was very indifferent about his dress, and neglected his body both in matters of comfort and in those that belonged to dignity of appearance, and often spoke evil of himself, proclaiming his own defects openly before all. Being struck with a complaint in the groin, he did not exhibit any sadness or fear at the nearness of death, but often and almost to the moment that he breathed out his spirit he showed a pleasant and even smiling face, as during life he had been joyous and alert.

JOHN THE BAKER

IN the year of our Lord 1448, on the day of St. Rufus the Martyr, died our beloved Brother John, called the Baker, a layman from Twenthia, whose duty was to bake, to brew, and to mend and piece the garments of the Brothers, and also to obtain and buy necessities for them; this business he effectively managed for many years, so that the same might have been said of him which is written in praise of Saint Sebastian, "faithful to his trust," for he did not spare himself whether in vigils or in many labours. In his old age he was during several years worn down with many pains, and at last lay down on his bed, where he remained for a long time with

wonderful patience, almost deprived of the use of his limbs, and except in the hours which nature demanded for sleep and food, he was constantly praying. He had dwelt with our Brothers for fifty years, and was about eighty-five years old.

In the appendix to *Dier de Mudén* there are letters that passed between Florentius and others who were away at Amersfoort during the plague, and those who remained at Deventer.

The first letter is written by Gerard of Zutphen to Florentius.

The second letter is from Florentius, Gerard, and William to Lubert ten Busche and Matthew of Mechlin at Deventer.

The third letter is from Florentius, Gerard, and William to Henry, Amilius of Steinfeld, Viana, Matthew, and John at Deventer.

The fourth letter is from Florentius, Gerard, and William, in grief for the death of Lubert, to the Brothers at Deventer.

The fifth letter is from Florentius, Gerard, and William, to Henry Bruen, Amilius, James, Henry, Matthew, and John, in the House of Florentius of Deventer.

The sixth letter is from Florentius, Gerard, James, Reyner, and William, to Henry Bruen, Amilius, Henry, Matthew, and John.

The seventh letter is from Florentius and Gerard, William of Schoonhoven, and James Viana, to Henry Bruen, Amilius of Steinfeld, and Matthew.

The eighth letter is from Florentius, William, James, John, Reyner, and Gerard, to Henry Bruen,

Amilius of Steinfeld, and Matthew, in the House of Florentius.

The extracts from *Dier de Mudén* that it appears desirable to offer to the reader end here. Dumbarton informs us that Rodolph Dier de Mudén was born at Mude in Holland, A.D. 1384. He was sent to school at Deventer; he was accepted as a novice by the Brothers in 1402; subsequently, by their unanimous desire, he was raised to the priesthood, and in 1435 they made him their procurator. He also was appointed to be one of the three librarians to whose care the books acquired by Gerard and Florentius were entrusted. He died in 1459, at the age of seventy-five.

The narrative begun by Dier de Mudén was continued by Peter Hoorn. It opens with an account of Godfrey Toorn de Mueza. His death, in 1450, is, as usual, recorded first. He had been Rector of the House at Deventer for forty years; devoted to the service of God, and acceptable both to the Brothers and to those outside.

In his youth he was a "lector" in the School of Deventer, and, following the counsels of Florentius, he was, after the death of the latter, received into the House by Amilius. Later on, by the desire of the Brothers, he was raised to the priesthood. So deeply did he feel this weight of responsibility, as was usual with these humble Brothers, that he is recorded to have said to a friend, that he would rather have lost both his arms than have been promoted to the Order of the Priesthood, and both his feet rather than come to be ruler over the House. He also remarked that unless a man, after being ordained

presbyter, practises himself in virtues and spiritual exercises, with great effort and endurance, doing so above all through the gift of the Holy Spirit, he will fall away day after day, whether he is himself aware of it or not, for the office of presbyter presupposes much, and its duties use up a great deal of virtue.

Another of his remarks was that there were two reasons why the Brothers made so little progress, one "that we observe the hours in a negligent way, and the other that we do not prepare ourselves for the Holy Communion in a sufficiently worthy manner." He was earnest in pressing upon the Brothers the importance of being peaceable and chaste, and of peace he would say, "My Brothers, we have left parents, relatives, and country, and the other desirable things of the world, and have for God's sake undertaken to live together; if therefore we are captious and spiteful and discordant, we are more miserable than other men." And he added, "My Brothers, you are putting me to death if you have discord among you."

He suffered much at the time of the excommunication, when the devout were proscribed by the civil authorities at Deventer, for he became the standard-bearer and leader in war for all who were pious, and he might say with truth, "All Thy waves and storms are gone over me"; for all the weight of the contest fell upon him, and he was driven out of Deventer before any of the others.

It would take long to tell what threats and reproaches he endured, but he remained glad and cheerful, and of such a great spirit that he said after

it was over, that never before nor since had he felt so much at peace, or so joyful as at that time. And although he was then hated by many, yet by Superiors and Canons and by the devout Fathers and Brothers he was much beloved.

He was pleased when he saw the Brothers fond of reading, but he strove to draw them to books that were devotional or moral, and would praise the memory of John Vos, Prior of Windesheim, who used to restrain his Brothers from the study of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas and such-like, and of modern writers who treated subjects in a scholastic manner desiring them to remain in their simplicity. "Simplicity," he would say, "is dying out among some, I am unwilling that this should be the case with us."

He was given to blaming himself, and unduly as it would appear, for his being all things to all men to the Brothers; but however this might be, it pleased God to chastise him as a son whom He had received, for he was chastened for several years with the pains of the stone, and then by paralysis, and other troubles, and bore them with great patience, and was never heard to complain. As his end approached, and he was about to receive the unction, he gave an earnest exhortation to the Brothers, touching upon our defects with some asperity, even as our Lord had upbraided His disciples with want of faith when about to depart. He died at the age of about sixty years.

In the year 1458, on the vigil of St. Gereon and St. Victor, in the evening just before seven o'clock, died of the plague, which then severely raged in Deventer, our beloved Brother Rodolph, the son of Lambert of

Muden, a layman, who had dwelt with us twenty-eight years, and who, led by the obedience of love, and the appointment of our Brothers, had served the scholars of the Devotion, in the Nova Domus, doing work in the kitchen, up to the end of his life.

His walk was very humble, and his bearing lowly, he was a careful guardian of his eyes, his words and manners were edifying, he carefully avoided familiarity with the opposite sex, and took high views of our system and its exercises. He led many to despise the world, and to enter the narrow way ; he yearned over the poor and the afflicted ; he was zealous for the morals of the youths, and the discipline of his House ; but he tempered his zeal with breadth of mind, so that he was cordially beloved by all. He was anxious for the cleansing of his conscience, and often made his confession, and scrupulously and carefully observed the festivals. When he found that he was touched by the plague, he was quite willing to die, and showed himself full of devoutness, praying frequently, and meditating on the Passion of the Lord Jesus ; only regretting that he had not watched over more victims of the plague among the devout before his death. When he observed signs of his approaching dissolution, he rejoiced, and at the proper time he asked for the taper that had been blest to be lighted, and held it in his hand, and so he remained in full possession of his senses till he expired. His habit of frequent prayer was shown after his death by the state of his knees, which were covered with a hard skin. He was sixty-two years of age. He was buried in the cemetery of St. Lebuin, and laid in the same grave with Peter de Groda and Helia Zibrand,

our devout Brothers, who with him had been appointed to serve the scholars of the Devotion in the aforesaid House; and these Brothers he had nursed and served when ill with an affection of the groin. There he now sleeps, awaiting with them the rewards of the resurrection, from the Lord God our Saviour.

In the year of our Lord 1458, in the octave of St. Martin, in the morning about the fourth hour, died our beloved Brother Henry Donkels, of Tonger, in the diocese of Liège, a cleric, who from his infancy was brought up in the close charge of parents who feared God, and was then sent to Deventer to study. He was placed under our care, with other scholars of the Devotion, in the Nova Domus, and when he had attained the age of twenty-one he was, after many entreaties, received into our House, in which he remained nine years, without any cause of complaint against him, beloved by all, and loving all. He was a man without gall, cheery and sociable, helpful to every one in humble works, as if he were the general beast of burden (*asinus*) to all; walking with simplicity, open about his defects without palliating them; looking upon himself as a plain man, and content to be so regarded by others, as one who thought of nothing except of what belonged to our mode of life. In the plague, which in the above-mentioned year violently raged among the population, and in about nine weeks carried off from their societies in our city, fifty-two Sisters and many secular persons, this good man, Henry Donkels, out of his obedience and charity, faithfully and cheerfully attended on our afore-mentioned Brother Rodolph when infected by the plague, giving himself over into

peril of death, and at length he was himself touched by the plague. Feeling this to be so, and asking leave, he devoutly visited the churches throughout Deventer, and went round them praying at the altars. After this, in his weakness he laid down on his bed. On the next day he received the venerable Sacrament of the Eucharist, and extreme unction, and continued until his death praying frequently, as had been his custom in life, so that the Brothers round him were greatly edified. At last feeling death near, he asked them to light the taper, and making the sign of the cross three times on his breast he said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and "Father, into Thy Hands I commend my spirit." So entering on his final struggle he expired in the thirtieth year of his age, and was buried with our Brothers in the same grave in which Rodolph the cook had been laid to rest, whom he had a short time before stood by and watched over in his illness.

In the year 1459, on the day before the festival of St. Benedict, in the evening before the tenth hour, died our beloved Brother Matthias, son of Gerard van Wesel of Zutphen in Geldria, a layman, who remained with us for twenty-five years and more, baking, brewing, and taking charge of our external affairs, buying wood, turf, and other necessities for the common use of our House. In these matters he was careful and sharp-sighted, seeking to further the general advantage; placing himself in the midst of cares and outward errands, so that the Rector and Procurator and the others might remain in peace. And he managed these very cares as if without care, for he had a quiet and modest spirit, not eager or

troubled in what he did, and obtaining leisure for others. He loved to profit by leisure in the times that he had for himself, and on festival days he studiously occupied himself in reading and meditating. Hence, he became so illuminated that, as regards the remedies against vices, and the practice of virtues, he knew how to give such clear counsels and to bring forward such apt proofs from the Scriptures, as to seem rather to be a cleric than a layman. And he had a special grace, whereby he often edified his fellows, namely, while hearing much of the news of the world, through his duty of going out every day and associating with seculars, he yet never mentioned this news to the Brothers,¹ hiding everything within himself, or, rather, putting it from him and letting it sink into oblivion. Moreover, he was united to his clerical Brothers in hearty affection and good-will; nor did he, as is the case with laics, readily differ, or turn from them with grudging ill-will, but on the contrary he bore himself with kindly and peaceful grace. He died in the forty-third year of his life; and up to the moment of his death he was anxious for the advancement of the House, and while prepared to serve the Brothers he yet preferred to die.

¹ *Imitatio*, ch. x—"Avoid the tumult of men as much as thou canst; for talk about worldly events is a great hindrance, although they be spoken of with sincere intention. For we are quickly stained and captured by vanity." Also chap. xx.

CHAPTER XI

TRANSLATIONS FROM DUMBAR'S 'ANALECTA'— *continued*

REFERENCE is then made by Peter Hoorn to Rodolph Dier de Mudén, who died 1459, aged seventy-five. He, while he was still a boy, began to seek the God of his fathers like Josiah, except that he had a mother very different from the father of Josiah, for she was very devout and often spoke to him of God, and he to her of God. At the age of fourteen he set out on his way to Florentius to begin his studies, and underwent a shipwreck. But God in His mercy, knowing that he would be a chosen vessel, preserved him in a wonderful manner; for another ship arrived unexpectedly, into which he entered with the others. When he had completed his studies, and Florentius was already dead, he was after many requests received into the Society of the Brothers of the House of Florentius. He bore himself humbly among them, and loved with all his heart to take the lowest place.¹ Hence it came about by

¹ "Abjectus"—a difficult word to translate—literally "a cast-away"; it is used in the passage Ps. lxxxiv. 10, where we translate "door-keeper" in the Bible and Prayer Book Versions; and this rendering in the Latin Vulgate evidently brought the word into use to signify extreme humility (v. *Spiritual Letters of St. Francis de Sales; letter to M^e de Chantal*).

Divine appointment as we believe, that he was advanced to the priesthood by the choice of the Brothers, and he was bidden to accept the office of Procurator. Loving quiet as he did, and sitting at the feet of Jesus, he would have found these duties very onerous, had not the Lord provided him with an energetic and industrious lay brother who greatly lightened his burden by his watchfulness; as of old Gerard is recorded to have done for St. Bernard.

Later on, as he had, by joining the Brothers in the lowest outward duties and work, become very acceptable to them, they resisted very strongly when the Fathers desired to transfer him to ruling over the Sisters; yet the design of the Fathers and a charity the more divine because it had regard to the interests of the whole community prevailed over the first unwillingness. Moreover the customs of our House were so thoroughly in accord with his heart, that when transferred to the rule over the Sisters he not only kept these customs very strictly, but even when seriously weakened and already near death he would not allow himself to be excused. If he noticed any Brother omit anything through negligence, he did not fail to admonish that Brother, and yet his way of admonishing was very humble, using few words, and when these were over his face would brighten up, as if he had said nothing of the kind. When already an old man, and decrepit, he remained as modest as a novice of half-a-year. On going into any one's room, he would enter with serious gravity, say what he had to say, and depart; never, as is the case with some, turning his eyes about to look at the various things in the room.

Of such humility and gravity was he in his looks and in his walk, that he seemed to belong to another age, and to be as one to whom the world was dead, and he to the world. When about to die he requested that there should be no expense at his funeral through inviting secular persons, but that "if you wish to give anything it should be bestowed on the poor on behalf of my soul." He was so restrained in his tongue that the passage of James might have been fully applied to him, "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." For we never remember him to have used an idle or unseemly word. There were three things which he himself anxiously avoided, and against which he cautioned others. They were these : first, a too great attention to bodily comfort ; secondly, a presumptuous audacity chiefly shown by young men in talking and interfering with their advice ; and thirdly, slips of the tongue in disparaging others.

A cleric used to say of him, "I hardly ever enter the chamber of Master Rodolph but I find him on his knees, except when he is sitting and writing," and in accordance with the counsel of the blessed Francis he spent more time in prayer than in reading ; and when he wished to read he sought such books as would rouse devotion rather than those which nourished curiosity ; bringing forward a saying of a certain Father : "First the Brothers are devout, then they become curious about literary inquiries, and lastly they grow unrestrained."¹ The reason of this is that the first generation are usually given to devotion, and, when that first earnestness grows

¹ Dumbar, *Analecta*, Vol. I, p. 134 : "primo devoti, secundo scientifici, et tertio dissoluti," etc.

lukewarm, then the eagerness for devouring books becomes ardent, and at length this also perishes and want of restraint follows.

When about to celebrate, he exercised himself studiously by prayer and meditation in the Passion of the Lord, and when only present at Mass he occupied himself in the same way during the service.

Lastly, though he showed all these virtues, and others not mentioned, and was regarded as a jewel among priests and an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile, yet was he truly vile and despicable in his own eyes, and remarked in a letter to a certain monk, not long before his death, "My years are many, and there is scarcely any fruit of them in me; pray therefore for me, that at least in my decrepit age I may be able to recollect myself." And as his death drew near, he did not like any comforting words about his merits, or the approaching glory that was to reward his labours, but only such words as sounded forth the mercy of God, and the inexhaustible merit of the Passion of Christ. In the last year of his life he wrote the greater part of what is contained in the preceding record, and we eagerly study these recollections on our days of festival.

In the year 1446, in the Octave of St. John the Evangelist, died our beloved Brother Paul Sceper of Kirtsich; fifty-two years with us, serving the brethren and the guests in the kitchen, and in all laborious and lowly offices until his death; mending old shoes, making and washing socks, and the like, in which duties he was so faithful that before his death he could hardly be kept away from them; so that when released from his work in the kitchen he still did

what he could, and when unable to walk to the kitchen he almost crept there, and tried to do this, that, or the other, as one careful to shun idleness. This was the more remarkable as he was a fully competent cleric, and because he had been high up in the school at Deventer (*Secundarius*), and yet he patiently gave himself to share secular duties, never aspiring to higher positions, and saw many younger men that might be called the sons of his sons from year to year advanced to the priesthood, and when we asked him whether he had not felt any pain of heart at this, he replied, "Very little," adding in his humble way, "I am no good for that." Besides the divine grace that was in him, he had also a natural kindness, so that he could not bear to see an animal killed, much less to kill one himself.

He was sociable with the Brothers and loved them all, and liked to be with them at the hours, at collations, and at other times. As he grew weaker he used often to say in Teutonic words: "O Lord God, would that I were in the kingdom of heaven!" And as the Brothers were familiar and pleasant with him above all the others, he being a man without bitterness and somewhat original in his ways, they used to say to him, "Brother Paul, you are an old man, would it not be better to be in the kingdom of heaven than here?" and he would answer in the vernacular, "Hoe coem ick dar?" He died in his seventy-eighth year, and was buried in the cemetery of St. Lebuin.

In the year 1466, the day after the festival of St. Simon and St. Jude, died our beloved Brother Lambert, born at Tyleta, a town in Flanders, who in his twenty-fourth year leaving his studies gave himself to

the Lord, and to our Brothers, to serve the scholars of the Devotion in the Nova Domus, instructing them in scholarship and good morals, obtaining for them as their procurator all that was necessary for their accommodation. In these matters he was very careful, as if he had been the Mother of all the students, and he was especially watchful for those who were poor or sick. Very zealous he showed himself for the discipline of that House, and was much afflicted when the scholars did not rule themselves in accordance with his wishes. It is our belief that his many anxieties and cares exceeded his strength, while he was trying to assist and suffice for every one, and that this was the cause of his illness and death. Truly that saying of the Lord might have been applied to him, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things." He was courteous and benevolent, knowing and loving all, and therefore loved by all, even by those in the world. Both Canons and citizens entertained a high opinion of him, he was beloved of God and man; his memory is blessed! With holy Job he was a father of the poor, with Elizabeth a mother to the sick, and with Martha anxious about constant serving. He held our Brothers in much reverence, showing them great respect up to the day of his death, quickly laying aside his own ideas and falling in with their counsels: and he did not think himself worthy of being visited in his sickness by the Brothers or that they should bury his body among their graves. Indeed he directed the Procurator to inter him in the cemetery where the scholars who died were laid. As he was in his life, so he remained until his death,

full of feeling, and eagerly listening for and receiving the hortatory and consoling words of the Brothers and turning them into prayers and groans : thinking all the while that he had little or no grace in these affections and meditations. He died in his fortieth year and was buried with the Brothers in the same grave with Peter Groda, Helias, and Rodolph the cook, who had before him and with him served the scholars in the Nova Domus.

Bernard Meyer died 1467. He had been a scholar and then a "lector" in the school, afterwards a singer and organist, but joined the Brothers, and on his death-bed at the age of thirty-three, in his second year after being made a priest, he declared that he would not for many barrels of gold have remained in the world and not have become a member of the Brotherhood.

In the year 1472 died Lambert, a cleric of Hugo near Liège. He gave his life for his brethren, exposing himself to the risk of death at the call of charity, for he faithfully and trustfully attended John of Kempis (not the prior) who had the pestilence, till his death ; and then through the whole winter he ministered to another sick one, in the squalor and odour of his ulcers, and in the washing of his linen, always sleeping in his clothes. Then he began to attend upon a third victim of the plague, and, when he had gone on for three days in this service, he fell ill himself ; his illness gaining upon him, he died in his twenty-third year. As to him we have the full confidence that purged by the watch that he had kept over the sick, he passed to the Lord, receiving from Him the crown of martyrdom, of love and of mercy, which

the faithful of old rejoiced to find through the opportunities of the plague; as it is written in the seventh book of the Church History: For it does not seem of less merit to die for charity than to die for faith; especially when the Lord hath said in His gospel, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends."

In the year of our Lord 1479, on the day of St. Elizabeth the Widow, about seven o'clock in the morning, died our beloved Brother, Peter Hoorn, presbyter, son of Theodoric Snyder, or the tailor, born in the village of Hen, near Horn, in Holland, whose parents were respectable and God-fearing and devout; his mother especially so, for she was an entertainer of the devout, a consoler of the poor, a nurse to the sick. She taught her son from his infancy to despise the world and to fear God, and Peter having made progress beyond his companions in school work and in singing at the school of Horn, was then sent to Deventer, where in a short time he was made head boy. In his eighteenth year, after many humble and earnest requests, he was received with affection by the Brothers, on the day of St. Ambrose the Bishop. So firmly did his love for our House and its exercises bind him thereto that he never after his entrance showed any inconstancy or vacillation. If at any time either monks or any others endeavoured to induce him to join another Order, or different mode of life, they had to withdraw in confusion. For with the teeth of pious zeal he bit the hands of all who strove to get him out of the House. When a novice he requested that he might be carefully admonished

and tried, and Godfrey, at that time Rector of our House, granting his prayer, used to blame him and humiliate him in the presence of the others, and in private to give him slaps on the cheeks. All this he bore with patience, and never murmured against the Rector; and when found fault with he took it as a sign that he was loved. So when the Rector was laid aside by illness, he gladly accepted him as an attendant, knowing that he was ready for anything, and could not be tired out in offices of charity. Nor did he fail in the most menial and even offensive duties that illness required, though himself weakly and unused to such matters.

He was severe with himself; for though for a long while weakly, and unable to sleep well at night, he was active in all the external labours of the Brothers, and carried on his exertions till he was a very old man. The copying of books was trying to him, as he had a tremulous hand, and in the winter he suffered so much from the cold in his joints, that the pen used to drop from him. Yet he never gave up writing, or hastened to the fire for warmth; and continued to be a writer until he died. Many of the books in our library were corrected and punctuated by him. In chapel he did not loll, or lean, but stood erect, and his bearing was so reverent that it seemed like that of an angel in the presence of God.

When he spoke of any particular virtue or vice, apart from other devout subjects, whether in the collations of the scholars or in the colloquies of the Brothers, he brought out his words with so much force, devotion, and fervour, that they seemed to pierce the hearts of his hearers. After he had admonished any one for

a fault, he would talk with him quite kindly and familiarly, so that he might show that he had not acted in anger; and those whom he admonished he nevertheless thought more highly of than he did of himself.

At last, when it pleased God to call His faithful servant from the miseries of this life to the glories of the heavenly kingdom, he suffered for about eight weeks from an internal attack, which prevented his keeping his food down, and also from the disease of the stone, but in all his sufferings he was patient, and would put his hands together and thank God when he had swallowed even a small morsel. All that happened to him he accepted as from the hand of a most loving Father, and most able Physician, who knew what was best for him, often repeating, "God's will be done." He passed away at the age of fifty-one years and a half on the day of St. Elizabeth the Widow, whom he had loved more than other Saints about seven o'clock in the morning, and was buried, in the ground of our Brothers in the cemetery of St. Lebuin, in the same grave with Rodolph Dier de Mudén, whose life he had written. He had also written about all our Brothers who had died after Rodolph, up to the time of his own death.

CHAPTER XII

TRANSLATIONS FROM DUMBAR'S 'ANALECTA'—
continued

EGBERT TER BECK

IN the year 1483, on the 16th day of April, about twelve o'clock in the evening, died our much-loved Father, the fifth Rector of our House, Egbert ter Beck; born at Wye, a village between Deventer and Zwolle. His father, who belonged to the more honourable and wealthy class of that place, sent him to the school of Deventer, to lodge with an aunt, a widow of good repute, and he abode with her, and afterwards with another honourable lady who also was his relative. By these he was brought up to good morals in his boyhood, and was induced to attend our House to listen to the collations of the Brothers, to make his confessions, and to gain the advantage of their instructions. As a young boy he caused his head to be shaved in imitation of the scholars who feared God, and he walked in simplicity, withdrawing himself from shows, and games, and other vanities of the world. And this he did, though, as he was lodging in a secular house, he had daily to associate with friends and relations who were seculars, who also belonged to the chief people of the town.

Moreover, when passing along the streets, he was so careful to keep a guard over his eyes that he scarcely saw the passers-by. Whence it happened that, as he was walking with a dish and its contents in his hand, a female relative met him, and, as he did not see her and therefore did not bow to her, she angrily knocked the dish out of his hands, and pertly remarked, "Who is this Lollard who goes along thus?" But he bore the remark with calmness, and picking up what had fallen, went on his way. His father, hearing that he had made remarkable progress in his studies, proposed to send him to Cologne, that he might be advanced to the degree of Master of Arts, or a higher one, and so become fit for preferment in the Church, or for secular dignities. But God promoting his salvation, the older he grew in years the more earnestly did he pant after the things of God, and he therefore turned his mind towards serving God at Windesheim. On this account he paid a visit there to observe the place and the life led by the Brothers.

He found, however, some of the laymen wrangling noisily among themselves, and, being far from edified by this spectacle, he turned his thoughts away from the place, and began to wish to join himself to our House. Doubts were felt on account of his having many relations in the town, and these among the great ones, but after many prayers and long delay, he was received as a novice in the year 1438, being then nineteen years old. His father, according to the flesh, hearing that his son had entered the House of Florentius, was much saddened, and coming to see him, he tried with many entreaties and promises to

induce him to leave. He held out to him that, if he was bent on becoming an ecclesiastic, he would found a new vicariate at Wye at his own expense and confer it on him. His son answered : " Listen, dearest father, as you are a prudent man ; the life of secular priests, as is evident to all men, alas ! is, contrary to the precepts of the Gospel, spent in excessive drinking, and, what is worse, in fleshly lusts, and considering the dangers to which my nature exposes me, it would be impossible for me, if I dwelt with them, not to become like them."

His father replied : " I will prepare for you a room in my own house, wherein you will be separated from all whose company you fear, and can occupy yourself with prayer and reading and other spiritual exercises to your heart's content, so that, led on by your example, the other priests may be induced to better themselves." To this the son rejoined : " My most beloved father, it will be easier for me to be perverted by them than that any of them should be converted by me : for I am not unaware of my own weakness and of the opposition of Satan. It will be better for me to remain in the ranks of this holy and praiseworthy society, where every member is a supporter. For this society, by daily effort in the spiritual combat, knows the snares of the enemy, and for its hardihood it is dreaded by the world, the flesh, and the devil ; just as the forces of a wisely ordered camp express the thought, ' Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth he hath none to raise him up.' "

By these and other words the father became convinced that he could not resist the spirit with which his son spoke, so he gave way, and thenceforward he

became a favourer of our House, and granted to his son, as was right, a portion of his substance. The devil, however, perceiving that he could do nothing through the earthly father, attacked the youth with his own suggestions, as we read in the warning given by the Wise Man, "My son, when thou comest to serve God be on thy guard and prepare thy soul for temptation," for he plied him with great weariness and a crowd of fears by night, and the weight of duty in the day appeared insupportable. For he had to continue sitting in his cell and writing, or go out of doors to severe labour, to eat little and poor food, as was then the custom. Out of doors he had to be tried in many ways, within he was straitened and tempted. These troubles were vividly brought to his mind by the devil, so that the burden of them seemed unbearable, and he became so pusillanimous that he saddened not a little the minds of the Brothers, and they meditated sending him to some other place. They would have done so, had not the then Procurator, named Orger, strongly opposed the idea, for he succeeded in consoling and strengthening Egbert most admirably by his prayers and exhortations. In consequence Orger was throughout life regarded by Egbert as his spiritual father and the parent of his soul, and he revered and loved him accordingly. And he used to quote sometimes for the consolation of the pusillanimous the sentence where it says, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." And according to what Master Gerard the Great wrote, "The Lord often permits those to be severely tempted and tried at first whom He intends to promote, so that they may be fitted to

advise and comfort His afflicted sons." So it was with Egbert, for when the year of his novitiate was completed, and he asked to be received among the Brothers, he was quite changed into another man. Faithful he proved in every way, not sparing himself in heavy labours, and chiefly by his exertions in the building of the House, in which the Brothers now dwell, and which was begun in the year of our Lord 1441.

Nor was he less active in spiritual matters, in accordance with our customs, and when he had dwelt for seven years in our House, he was by the command of the Rector and the Brothers ordained presbyter, at the age of twenty-six; and five years after was chosen to be the fifth Rector of our House, by the desire of both Godfrey (who was lying ill, suffering grievous pains) and of the Brothers. It fell to him to carry the Society through various difficulties (*vide* pages 171-2). One of these was as follows. A certain Canon Regular made a complaint to Nicolas de Cusa, the Apostolic Legate, as to the system of our Brotherhood, and Egbert had reason to apprehend that our common life and condition might be brought to an end. But owing to his patience and great trust in God, the matter turned out exactly the other way. For when prayers were offered without ceasing by the devout, one of them beheld, in a dream at night, a vessel full of the Brothers and the Sisters tossed about in the waves, and, when they earnestly called upon God for help, suddenly the tempest ceased, and the ship successfully reached the port, through the divine succour. The result of the matter proved the vision to be true, for on the following

day the Rector being summoned to the Legate, found him favourable beyond his hopes. For God had sent help through the friends of the devout, and the Legate commended their mode of life, offered privileges for their defence, and proposed to bestow on them the status of Canons; but Master Egbert as a lover of simplicity declined these offers lest he should depart from the intention of our primitive Fathers and Brothers, whose views he was used to expressing.

A similar trouble occurred later on; for at Doesborch the Rector of that House had gone so far towards leading his Brothers towards becoming Canons Regular, that the Prior of Windesheim was actually there to invest them; but when Master Egbert had heard this, he immediately came there and directed the Brothers otherwise, and convicted the Prior of presumption. And when the Prior asked what evil he had done by the proposal of advancing the Brothers from a merely secular ecclesiastical condition to the religious one, Master Egbert answered, "I do not join issue with you because you are transferring seculars to religion, but because, contrary to charity, you are taking possession of our abodes. This place is given to our Brothers that they may dwell here as Brothers; those who wish to be made monks should leave, and betake themselves to places which belong to monks." And so the Prior retired in confusion.

In the year 1453 a most severe pestilence prevailed in the House of Gerard Groot (the one he had left for women who became Sisters), and their confessor, being incapacitated by old age, could not minister to

them ; Egbert therefore undertook the task of hearing their confessions, and of administering the Sacraments. He entered their infected chambers, and going up into their dormitory he confessed and consoled them, and moreover went with the dead to their funerals. In the year just mentioned twenty-nine Sisters died. In the same way he used to stand by those afflicted with pestilence in his own House putting the taper into their hands in their last agony, and encouraging them in patience, and this at moments when the Infirmarius stood aside pale with fear.

He had an intimate friendship with that venerable man Brother John Brugman, of the Order of Minorites, who, before he was reformed himself, as he laments in one of his letters, used to be a bitter assailant of our system, but after his reformation, in sermons, letters, and exhortations to the Brothers, he encouraged them to remain in their own simple calling, and in the care of the little ones ; and he would say, " If it were lawful for me to take off the cowl of my Order and to enter your Society, I would not hesitate long, seeing the fruits that spring from your efforts. I have preached for many years with the applause of crowds of people, and yet I doubt whether I have thoroughly converted one old woman ; but you see the fruits of your efforts before your eyes, in a multitude of youths, parents and friends leaving their native soil for God's sake, and eagerly crossing over into the path that God has shown them through you." This venerable Father when lately he was about to leave our House, never to return, caused all the Brothers to be called together in the great hall, and

having broken wheaten bread he gave to each of them a portion dipped in wine, to show his deep love for them, and then took his last farewell.

After suffering from the disease so common among the Brothers, Egbert was carried off by a fever that caused the death of many, after ruling the House for thirty-two years and a half, in the sixty-fourth year of his age, and was buried with the other Brothers in the cemetery of St. Lebuin.

CHAPTER XIII

LIFE OF JOHN HATTEN, BY THE VENERABLE
BROTHERS PETER OF UTRECHT AND GERARD
DE BUSCO, HIS DISCIPLES

IN the year of our Lord 1485, on the vigil of Pentecost, at the hour of eleven in the morning, died our beloved Brother and Procurator, John Hatten, presbyter, born at Wilsem, near Zwolle. He was taught by his devout and godfearing parents to stand in awe of God, and to avoid evil; and was sent by them to Doesborch to acquire a knowledge of grammar, so that when adequately trained therein he might in his turn show his good disposition towards higher things, by becoming a soldier of the omnipotent Lord. With how ready a spirit he entered upon this service, and with how active a mind he followed it unto the end, will be shown in the following pages. Witness to his character in his tender youth was borne after John Hatten was grown up by the master of his school, who remarked, such as you see this man as he is now, in his ripe age, upright, honest, and disciplined, such was he in his attractive youth, silent, reverential, and obedient.

So it came about that on the completion of his studies in his seventeenth year he was received after

many humble and earnest requests as a novice by our Brothers then in exile at Zutphen. At that time the diocese of Utrecht was greatly upset, and nearly all the religious and devout had been driven away because they observed the sentence of excommunication promulgated by the Apostolic See, as to which more will be said hereafter. John therefore, not dreading their poverty, put his hand while still young and tender to vigorous labours. First he was made servant to the cook, he cleaned the pots and pans, attended to making up the fire, and other humble tasks, and fulfilled all menial duties of cleaning in the kitchen cheerfully with great delight.

Although with Martha he ministered in outward things, yet with Mary he occupied himself as much as he could with internal aspirations. At that period he made it his study to listen to the sayings of the Elders, and with a soul athirst he drew in the streams of moral doctrine, which hereafter in due time were to flow forth from him for the profit of many. Having been faithful in a little he was advanced to higher things, and being raised from the kitchen he was made sacrist and keeper of the oratory. Attending therefore to this angelic office, he strove to the utmost of his power to show himself a fit and faithful minister. And being found trustworthy in these duties, and when it pleased the Most High that he should rise to a higher step, he was by the election of the Brothers and by the command of the Superior promoted to the priesthood.

But he, impressed with the dignity of the order of the priesthood and his own faultiness, gave way to groanings and wailings out of the humility of his heart.

and dwelt to the utmost on his own unworthiness, the loftiness of the office and many other points which he hoped would stand in the way of his promotion. Yet when he saw that he succeeded not in these efforts, and that he must trust to the arguments of Master Clement and the Brothers, he accepted the yoke of the Lord in humble obedience. He was therefore sent to Liège, and visited on his way our Brothers in Louvain near the Church of St. Martin. Over them at that time presided our Brother Giles Walram, by whom, as well as by his colleague Peter of Amsterdam, he was welcomed with affection. This was the same Giles who, moved by a different spirit, afterwards abandoned the condition of a Brother of the Common Life, despised as it was in the eyes of men, and sought a more honoured position in the Church, becoming a Canon Regular, with those who belonged to him. Meanwhile John Hatten, going to Liège, took up the dignity of the holy order of the priesthood. Having therefore been made a priest he exerted himself to the utmost to bear to the best of his power a weight which would be formidable even to the shoulders of angels. Moreover, there was hardly a day, so greatly did the flame of love increase in his heart, that he failed to offer the life-giving sacrifice to God for the weal of the living and the dead, and for his own. Nor was he deterred from this except by some lawful impediment.

In the collations that he conducted he taught the young with much fervour and instructed them in the truths that pertain to salvation, by bringing forward simple matter, such as the histories of the Saints, the four Last Things, or the subjects of chastity and

of contempt of the world ; of these he frequently adduced suitable examples, whereby he led many to despise the world, to confess their sins, and to enter the path of religion. In his collations he had a humble and kindly manner, sometimes reading out of a book, as if he had forgotten what he was going to say, and then he would question those who were sitting by, saying, "Tell me, my beloved, what names have I mentioned in the beginning of this history?" He spoke from his heart, as though instructing himself no less than others, and saying, "My beloved, thus and thus ought we to do."

He did not make declamations or divisions as is the custom with preachers, lest his exhortations and advice should lose the name of a collation, and be termed a sermon instead.

He was unwearied in receiving the confessions of the boys who were scholars throughout the whole of Lent, and before the chief festivals. In this work for God, as in others, he had been endowed with much grace from the Lord ; so that by his teaching and questioning he was able to draw out leviathan and pierce his cheek with a hook, so that numbers went forth free and relieved from the burden of their sins, they rejoiced in their hearts and said, "the snare is broken, and we are delivered." He was gentle also and kind, and so he was able to penetrate into the corners of consciences, so that those who were confessing to him, could have believed he had seen everything and had been present. It was his custom to press on those who confessed the usefulness of confession, and the importance of honesty and truthfulness, and he had examples to bring forward

whereby he knew how to persuade the young ones, and used to say to the timid and frightened, "Dearest, speak freely, I alone shall hear, I must not repeat what you tell me, think, the time must come when you will die, and the evil one is standing behind you with a drawn sword to strike." And when he had by these exhortations drawn out everything, by argument, consolation, and instruction, he would show forth the remedies. Hence it arose that nearly all the scholars, old and young, hastened to him, calling him a saint, and a true physician of the soul, and receiving all that they heard from him as a message from God.¹ He well knew, as was said by Gerson, Chancellor of Paris, that if the Church was to be reformed, it could be the most readily done through those who were trained in good morals, and the practise of virtue while still in their juvenile years, and so he was most zealous for their salvation, knowing that the tender mind of youth can be bent in any direction.

Scholars and others, both the younger and the older, after confession or at other times, he would welcome with a joyous countenance, and ask them, "How is it with you, my beloved, how are you? Are you going to be a servant of the Lord Jesus, or do you not wish to serve the Lord Jesus, whom to serve is to reign?"

Hence it came about that this man, beloved of God, and marked out by his virtuous efforts, was

¹ The translator has inserted this passage for the sake of historical accuracy, but desires to express his own firm adherence to the limitations laid down in the Exhortation that refers to confession and absolution in our service for Holy Communion.

by the election of the Brothers appointed Procurator of our House, and stood second after the Rector, as is our custom, in the administration of both spiritual and temporal affairs, in which duty he became all things to all men, so that no one should leave him empty or unconsolated ; if wealthy he received counsel, if needy assistance, if depressed or in sorrow, consolation, if at fault he departed with warning and loving correction.

Impatience was far from this good man, a defect rarely absent in procurators, and negligence also. For he provided with all faithfulness, according to the saying of the Apostle, " It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." He was careful lest there should be any deficiency of food or drink in cellar or pantry, and so arranged as to supply to each what was needed, and also garments of wool or linen suited to outdoor or indoor work, and he duly attended to whatever had to be bought or sold, repaired or mended. So he was helpful to all in all things, whether great or small, whether external or internal. By the great goodness of God, the administration of outward matters did not stand in his way in the observance of the ancient simplicity, devotion, and internal training. This is rare in the present age, when evil has gained ground far and wide, and we may now observe any day how such outward calls lead away both superiors and inferiors from discipline and plunge them in the abyss of secular life.

It was noticed how much he was assisted by his habit of not going out in public except when required by necessity, and after his business was concluded he would return as quickly as possible, like a fish out of

water, to his cell. So exact had he been in his duties, that when the day of his death was approaching, nothing had to be inquired into of the affairs entrusted to him, all was found right and straight. He was careful about promising anything, adding, "if I shall be able," "if anything does not occur to prevent me," lest he should in anywise trouble his neighbour by disappointing him, or incur the reproach of unfaithfulness himself. So he measured his powers before making promises. Letters that were sent to him from those who had died, he faithfully forwarded as soon as possible to their destination. To Brothers who asked pardon for damage they had done, he was not sharp or severe, especially where it was not a case of thoughtless negligence, and if he noticed any one perplexed he would console him and say, "My beloved, I am sometimes in that difficulty," or, "That very thing at times happens to me, let us amend ourselves, and keep a more careful look-out." When any Brothers asked for things which seemed to be desired rather from love of indulgence than of necessity, such as clothes that were not really wanted and the like, he did not agree to their wishes at once, but he would exhort them to bear poverty in mind, and to resist their inclinations, as was the duty of soldiers of Christ, bringing forward the passage from the Acts, "Distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need." Or that saying of Augustine in the Rule: "It is better for the servants of God to make their wants less rather than to provide more, and those are the happiest who are strong in enduring poverty," and other like remarks. As he endeavoured in the matter of dress, food, and

dishes, so he exerted himself not a little that the original simplicity and accustomed mortification should be maintained in the mode of copying, binding, and illuminating books. Inventors of new and curious ways of binding, who desired to instruct the Brothers, he would never admit, for he wished that books should be prepared with faithfulness and strength, but not ornamented with curious devices.

He was careful of the times of silence and devotion which could be secured amid the bustle of outward work, knowing that temporal affairs should be placed after those that are spiritual. He taught the Brothers that after eight o'clock in the evening and at other hours appointed for quietude, if they had occasion to enter their cells, they should do so without noise, just as if they were about to commit a theft, and that they should not shut the door of the cell without lifting the latch with their hand, mentioning that formerly he had learnt to do so from his master the instructor of the novices, and as regards this and all else that he taught the Brothers, no one could say to him, "physician, heal thyself," for he was an imitator of that of which Luke speaks, "Jesus began to do and to teach." And he might have been described by the saying of Athanasius, that his "life commanded and his tongue persuaded."

Moreover, he glowed with such an ardour of charity, that he strove to draw every human being, whether rich or poor, and of whichever sex, to God out of the world, as an offering to Him, and to His kingdom, and this as regards the soul, for as to bodily needs, up to the limit of his powers and even beyond he would assist with help and counsel both neighbours

and inmates, ready to bestow on others things necessary to himself, from brotherly love. In this way, God leading him, he successfully ascended the steps of love to his neighbour, doing nothing to any that he would not have done to himself, rejoicing with them that rejoiced, and weeping with them that wept, regarding their circumstances as his own, whether happy or adverse. He was ready to give his life to the Brethren, waiting on those who were afflicted with deadly infectious illness; for he was pitiful and consoling to those who were sick, and who lay in pain, and as if anointed all over with the oil of compassion, he yearned over the sufferers, so that he might without untruth have said, "Who is afflicted and I am not afflicted?" If any suffered from exhaustion he would send for the doctor, and order suitable medicines to be provided, and in his frequent visits to the sick he would express thoughts of consolation and warning, of which he had an abundant store—chiefly admonishing them not to grow weary and impatient beneath the hand of the Lord—but rather to remember constantly the Passion of Jesus Christ, and how great were the sufferings of all the Saints. And he would tell them that they had not yet suffered in accordance with their deserts, and that they might hope by the infinite mercy of the Father through this tribulation which is but for a moment to be redeemed from all the penalties of eternal woe; so that they might repeat the words of Godfrey, their former Rector, with heart and mouth, "The bread is consumed, O Lord, the bread is consumed, and that Thou mayest spare in eternity, here wound me, O Lord, here burn me, here lacerate me."

To give another instance out of many of his

opposition to anything that appeared contrary to the ancient simplicity. When from the carelessness of a Brother the table in hall already fully prepared was upset, and all the jugs full of beer were not only overthrown but also broken, Egbert the Rector, disturbed by this loss, and the like mishaps which occurred daily by the breaking of jugs, arranged that jugs of tin should be prepared, as we had already a good deal of this kind of metal which had been left us by two Brothers of Zwolle as a part of their inheritance, but when the Rector had brought the proposal before the seniors and providers, and hardly any one seemed against it, John Hatten the Procurator vigorously opposed it, preferring to accept loss in temporal goods rather than detract from the simplicity ordained by the Fathers; the suggestion appeared to him to derogate from simplicity, and therefore he at once sold the metal, so that there might no longer be an occasion of doing away with the customs of the Fathers.

The same earnestness led him to prevent painted windows being put up in the chamber of the sick, at the time that the house which contained it was built, for the givers of those windows had wished to ornament them with the portraits of their parents and the arms of their families, and by this there would be a diminution of simplicity, so he preferred to pay the price of glazing out of the common treasury of the House.

In the services,¹ mindful of the presence of angels,

¹ In the Church of St. Mary, Shrewsbury, there is an ancient window of foreign glass, in which monastic life is represented. In one of the scenes the monks appear in the stalls of their chapel, and before each monk stands a little angel with a tablet making notes.

he offered a vigorous resistance to sleepiness, as the prophet says, "Cursed is he that doeth the work of God negligently," and he would rub his forehead, or rise up, or pull the hairs of his beard or head, till the heaviness went off. He would teach the same resistance to the Brothers, saying to them, "My beloved, contend ye as faithful soldiers of Christ, a man is not crowned, except he strive lawfully. When we do what we can, God, who beholds all, will in His goodness have mercy on the vanquished, and will be the unwearying helper of those who fight; moreover, the devils themselves, who encourage this sloth, when they see us ready for battle, will be afraid of being defeated and confounded, and will retire, not soon to return."

To these encouragements he used to add that the Saints in the heavens and our Brothers who have been received by God are looking down, and watchfully notice who are strong in the struggle, and who are indolent, not a little indignant with the latter, for we are made a spectacle to the world, to God, to angels and to men. What therefore do you think they will say of the Brother who is not praying, who is lukewarm, careless, and not lamenting his sins, nor asking help? They will say that he is undoubtedly conquered, "he is not of the sons of this House, he knows not how to mourn, he is allied with the enemy, he is a lover of his own flesh, let him be cast out, or let a millstone be hanged about his neck, that is, let him only care for external and temporal gains, and let him be drowned in the depths of the sea, that is, let him be reckoned among the seculars."

As regards manual labour our Brother attended

thereto earnestly, not sparing his already diminished strength, and often exceeding it, whether in writing or illuminating in his cell, or working in the open air, so vigorously that he often outdid those who were physically stronger, exclaiming when a task of labour was finished, "Work, work; we are at leisure, we have no work!" And to his fellow-labourers to lighten their toil, "My beloved, from one good work to another till we attain eternal rest!" Or again, "Let us labour manfully, soon we shall have long repose in the grave." He was much delighted when he found his own hands and those of the Brothers blistered with labour, calling the blisters jewels for the adornment of the soul, and often he would ask the Brothers on their return from their work, "Have you jewels on your hands? Let us see!" He kept on even into old age with these exertions, always equally fresh, earnest, and pleasant, till the Brothers, compassionating his age, bid him cease to take part in brewing, grinding corn, and the like.

A careful guardian of his tongue was he, always bearing in mind that saying of James, "If any man offend not in word the same is a perfect man," and the declaration of the Lord, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." And that, "If any man among you seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain." By the grace of God he abstained not only from detraction and contradiction, but also from idle and jesting conversation, and rather than this, as one taught of God, he knew what, to whom, and when, to speak, and as we read, "A good man out of the good

treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things," every word he uttered was good and useful for edification. The Prior of Windesheim, Theodoric Gravie, a most notable man, used to bear witness of him after his happy death, to the Priors and Fathers, that he did not believe that for fifty years he had ever given utterance to a word that was offensive or useless or wanting in edification, and added, "I was intimately acquainted with this man for many years, and his praiseworthy conversation was well known to me, he kept as the law and rule of his life the customs of his House, as handed down by the Fathers, not falling away from these from morn till eve, so that I cannot doubt that I may name him, owing to the power he had already received from God, among the number of those Saints whose suffrages I daily ask."

At the hours, at midday, or evening, when the Brothers had assembled for collations, he used to bring forward aphorisms, moral sayings, and the most edifying quotations from the Fathers, instead of deep or disputable matters, and in these meetings he used to be even in his last years pleasant and friendly as well as weighty, so that he cheered up all the Brothers. He brought forward when it was suitable, the deeds and words of the ancient Fathers and Brothers, which he had committed in his youth to the depths of his memory, and applied them as vividly and affectionately as if it were only yesterday that he had heard or seen them. But if he noticed any of his hearers to be contentious, as sometimes happens, or holding out more obstinately than was *fitting* in their own ideas, with a grave and thoughtful

countenance he would mention the words of the Apostle, "If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God." If he heard any one contradict, he did not argue or pertinaciously defend his own opinion, but quietly replied, "Perhaps it may not be as I have said, I have not read everything, nor do I know everything, the Scripture has a nose of wax, and is pinched by different people in various directions."

When he had grown aged, and his wonted vigour of body was failing, he was yet conqueror of his advancing years, and would not yield to old age, but was still most fervent in observing the hours, in celebrating the divine rites, in exhortation, in reproof, in teaching. Moreover, as regards the active labours of the community, which even the robustness of the youths could not endure without effort, he, an old man, went through them with alacrity, and worked beyond his strength. And he not only abstained from ever desiring the indulgence which the Fathers and Brothers extended to him, but would not even agree to it, except under the compulsion of obedience. When made to cease from the harder labours, he showed great readiness in fulfilling the lesser tasks. He arrived first when the Brothers met, he ministered at the table, he shaved the beards, and he carried out all the obligations of the Procurator, not accepting any vicarious service when his strength allowed, lest according to the saying of Florentius he should find a substitute when the time came for the heavenly rewards. While he exercised all his kindness of heart upon the weak and languishing, he would not allow the same to be spent on himself if he could

escape it. We have seen him mount to the top of the house, to call a Brother, but so laboriously, that when the ascent was finished he could hardly get his breath, and sometimes he would sit down on the steps, resting his weary limbs, panting and gasping, and when asked if he did not feel ill, he would answer with a cheerful face, "My legs, my legs are the cause, they obey not the ancient laws." These few things among many I have endeavoured to the best of my power to commit to writing, which I have partly seen myself with my own eyes, and have in part heard from others, for it would be very unworthy and very negligent if the acts and words of so noble a man were left to oblivion ; but if any one desires to know his life with completeness, and how he lived after his conversion from the world, let him read through the records of our customs, and therein he will find represented the patterns, the habits, and the acts of this beloved Father, for these customs he followed with the utmost diligence, not turning aside to the right or to the left from morning till evening, and these were a second nature to him, so that none of them had become tiresome or unbearable to him.

And because he was acceptable to God, it was necessary that he should be proved by trials. So that most vexatious suffering, the painful disease of the stone, was sent him. And for several years before his death he was tortured by it, so that often he was unable to eat or sleep ; he however bethought him of the words of our holy patron Gregory, and "assumed that he was loved, as he was held worthy to be reproved," and as a most brave soldier of Christ, he very patiently bore the hand of the Lord,

and studied always "to give thanks amid his pains"; and he put on so cheerful a countenance, and so carefully observed the exercises of the House, and came to the common gatherings, that he appeared to endure no pain and to suffer no inconvenience to those who were not aware of his torments, and seemed to them the same man, whether in prosperity or adversity. When he had attained his seventy-second year, and had passed through the allotted span of life, in all sanctity and patience, it pleased God to take his faithful servant to his reward, and the pain of his disease began to distress him more and more. Having performed the office of the Mass in the house called Buyskens,¹ and tired his limbs beyond measure, some failure of the body set in which prevented his being ever at ease to the day of his death. This weakness he so entirely concealed that scarcely any rumour of it spread among the Brothers; he ministered to them at the time of refection, and in the services of the hours, as if he suffered nothing. At last, on the second day after the Ascension of the Lord, when his state could no longer be hidden, and was noticed by the cook and the guardian of the infirmary, they, pitying his condition, caused a small portion of more suitable food to be prepared by the Sisters without his knowledge. When this was offered him at supper-time through the window of the refectory, moved by an indiscreet fervour he closed the window with a bang, and returning to the table he cut himself a piece of salt meat as if he were as well as usual, but as soon as he had taken a little of it, he was seized with feverish shudderings,

¹ "In Domo Buyskens," a house of their Sisterhood.

and as these increased he could no longer hide his exhaustion. After supper he went into the garden, and entered the Vicarage of St. Paul, recently bought by our Brothers, where formerly Florentius dwelt, when he was Vicar, with our primitive Fathers, and praying and singing Psalms there for a while he returned, and, as if he had received there some answer about his death, seeing two novices at work in the garden he asked them, "Would you like to go to Jerusalem with me?" To which one of them replied, "You will easily obtain entrance there, but what is in store for me I know not." Our Brother remarked, "Yet I hope you will not forget me," and he answered, "If I were to forget you, let my right hand be forgotten." These things having been said he entered the outer room of the chamber of the sick, and there lay down for a little while on a bed. On the next day and after his exhaustion increased, but he tried not to lie down on the bed, and did not absent himself from the monthly colloquy then held. On the third day, noticing that his weakness grew upon him, he fetched from his cell his *Mirror of Examples*, and took it into the infirmary, to look out in it examples of holy men who were sick and dying, whereby he might be prepared for his last struggle. He then received the Sacraments of the Church, before doing so asking pardon and requesting the prayers of all present. By his warnings, mingled with penitence, he moved many to sobs and tears. All who came to see him he addressed with devout exhortations, setting before them the way of God's Commandments, and that they should while health lasted keep before their eyes the

hour of death. The Brothers of his own community he urged to mutual charity, and the observance of the customs of the House, and to the guidance and admonition of the scholars.

Moreover, those that were priests he exhorted about undertaking to hear the confessions of the youths, stating that an inestimable gain to souls resulted therefrom, and that he himself longed for another week of soundness for this purpose only, that he might hear the confessions of the new scholars, of whom a vast number had come up, and might instruct them. And of this desire he gave an evident proof, for when already lying down on the bed a scholar came to him, for the sake of visiting him in his illness, he saw him while yet far off, and said to the Brothers, "I pray you leave me for a little time, for I think this youth is coming to make a confession."

When asked by the Brothers to pray to the Lord for longer life, he answered, "I have already lived long enough, but alas! I have taken too little trouble to amend, my Lord is exceeding wise, and I am not able to sound the depths of His counsel." Asked how far he was at ease in his conscience, he replied, "Thou shalt call me, and I will answer, despise not Thou the work of Thine own hands"; quoting also the words of St. Ambrose, "I do not fear to die, as I have a good Lord." So, lying down on his bed, finding nothing disturbing in his conscience, or distracting in the affairs that had been entrusted to him, with a genial heart and placid countenance he went through the Hours and the usual suffrages to the Saints. Affable to all who visited him, and without fear of death, he came to his last day, nor was it wonderful that to him

the passing forth from this state of exile should be the entrance into heavenly life. When, therefore, the vigil of Pentecost had arrived and he had agonized throughout the night, he said to the Brothers who were ministering to him, "What means this agony, and heavy sweat, would that God would come and release me from this exile!" When day had risen, raising himself in his bed with the help of a Brother, he asked to have his clothes put on, observing that he had known many good men who had died in their clothes and in their chair. So his clothes being put on, he asked for food, and when the attendant wanted to put a spoon into his mouth, he said, "Give me the dish and spoon into my hands, I can quite take food by myself, for many years have passed since my mother said to me, 'John, eat by yourself'—" *"Heneken etet alleene."* Having taken a little food, he felt death at hand. So he requested that all the Brothers should leave the room, and the Rector of the House should alone remain with him. And when they were gone, he said to him, "If you have any doubtful matter to ask me do so quickly, for John is going elsewhere, and will no longer be with you in this world." A few words having passed with the Rector, he asked the infirmarius to bring the candle, the incense, the holy water, and the tablet of the dead.

After this he requested to be placed on a chair, and thus, servant of God as he was, and praying without ceasing, as though asking leave to go from his Father and the Brothers who stood round, he gradually bent his head and fell asleep happily in the Lord, in the year one thousand four hundred and eighty-five, about the hour of eleven in the morning, for whom God be

blessed for ever. Amen. Let the pious reader consider and lay up deep in his heart what kind of man John was and how great, who walked in this House unweariedly for so many years, namely, fifty-five ; and had attained the age of seventy-two, always becoming better than his former self, and this, although he had the hindrance of official duty and the weight of various matters of business. For it is one thing for a spiritual man remaining in his cell without any care of temporal affairs all his life to persevere in the good things he had begun, and another for a Brother holding office, distracted by various occupations, and amid the cares and chances of his outward duties, having often occasions of declining, to make progress constantly in virtue, and amid the anxieties of transitory affairs to increase his spiritual gains up to his last hour ; and it is certain this man succeeded in that effort.

Farewell now, my beloved father, and when thou art standing before the most benign countenance of our Heavenly Father, I pray thee do not forget thy poor son, whom almost from boyhood thou hast nourished !

APPENDIX A

In Proctor's *Index to the Early Printed Books in the British Museum* a list is given of some of the works printed by the Brothers of the Common Life and now in the Museum.

AT MARIENTHAL

2604. — The earliest dated book, 1474, *Breviarium Moguntinum*.
2605. n.d. *Cærimonie ordinis S. Benedicti, de observantia Bursfeldensi* (Bursfeld).
2606. n.d. Gerson : *Opus tripartitum* (Charlier).
2607. n.d. *Ordinarius monachorum de observantia Bursfeldensi*.

AT COLOGNE

(The house in which printing was done was at Weidenbach ; in 1475 it is said that the printing was moved to Brussels.)

1132. 1475. Gerson : *Opuscula quam plurima*.
1133. n.d. (1) Rabbi Samuel : *Tractatus contra Judæos*.
(2) Prosper : *Responsiones contra objectiones vincentianas*.
(3) Joh. de Turrecremata : *Contra errores Mahumati*.
(4) *Dialogus christiani contra saracenum*.
(5) Athanasius.
(6) Silvester.
(7) *Tabula contentorum* (wanting).

AT BRUSSELS (1476)

9325. n.d. Athanasius : De fide catholica.
 9326. n.d. Eusebius : Legenda S. Silvestri.
 9327. 1476. Am. Geilhonon : Gnoto solitos.
 9328. 1478. Lucas episcopus Sibinicensis : Literæ indulgentiarum, Rome.
 9329. 1478. Æg. Carlerius : Sporta, sportula fragmentorum.
 9330. 1479. Johannes Chrysostomus : Homiliæ XXI.
 9331. 1480. Breviarium Carmelitanum.
 9332. 1480. Joh. de S. Laurentio : Postillæ evangeliorum dominicalium.
 9333. 1481. Bernardus : Epistolæ (Bodleian).
 9334. 1481. Bernardus : Sermones de tempore et sanctis.
 9335. n.d. Cassianus : Collationes patrum.
 9336. n.d. Gregorius : Homiliæ in Ezechielem.
 9337. n.d. Petrus Blesensis : Epistolæ (two copies in Bodleian).
 9339. n.d. Vitæ Patrum Jerome.
 9340. n.d. Petrus de Aliaco : Lectura sententiarum (Bodleian).
 9341. n.d. Bonaventura : Stimulus amoris.
 9342. n.d. Petrus de Aliaco : Speculum considerationis.
 9343. n.d. Franciscus de Marone : Sermones de tempore.
 9344. 1484. Legenda Henrici imp. et Kunegundis.
 9345. 1485. Breviarium Cisterciense (fragments).

APPENDIX B

DATES CONNECTED WITH THE "MODERNA
DEVOTIO"

	BORN.	DIED.
Gerard Groot	1340	1384
Florentius Radewin	1350	1400
Thomas à Kempis	1380	1471

	BORN.	DIED.
Foundation of the Monastery of Winderheim	1386	—
J. Busch	1399	1480
John à Kempis appointed first Prior of Mount St. Agnes	1399	—
H. Brune (the last survivor of the Brothers whose lives were written by à Kempis. This shows they were not written before 1440)	—	1439
Rudolph Dier de Mudén (Procurator at Deventer)	1384	1459
Godfrey Toorn de Mueza (Rector at Deventer)	1390	1450
Lambert de Tileta (School-master)	1426	1466
Peter Hoorn (Procurator)	1428	1479
Egbert ter Beck (Fifth Rector)	1419	1483
John Hatten (Procurator)	1413	1485

GENERAL DATES

Council of Constance	1414
John Huss burnt	1418
Henry IV, statute in England for burning heretics	1400
End of Papal schism, Martin V elected Pope	1417
Taking of Constantinople by the Turks	1453
Wars of the Roses	1455-1471
Accession of Henry VII in England	1485

APPENDIX C

THE object of this appendix is to offer some translations from the treatise of Thomas à Kempis, entitled *De fideli dispensatore*, contained in the edition of his works by Sommalius, which show the importance attached by à Kempis to practical good works, such as were so largely fulfilled by the Brothers of the Common Life among whom he had been trained in youth. Supposing à Kempis to be the author of the *Imitatio*, as Hirsche and Kettlewell have gone far to prove, and as is asserted by his contemporary, Busch of Windesheim, then the accusation of the excellent and able Dean Merivale of his teaching being self-centred is refuted, not only by de Montmorency's quotations from the *Imitatio* itself, but also by this treatise on Martha and Mary.

CHAPTER II

Although the part of Mary is more eligible and sweeter, yet the laborious part of Martha, her sister, is praiseworthy and accepted of God; as the Lord Himself says in the Gospel, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." To serve belongs especially to Martha, as to be at leisure belongs to Mary. Yet these two sisters are not to be separate from each other, nor should they contend as to the respective merits of their conditions. It should rather be their effort equally to receive Christ as their guest, that in all things they may stand perfectly, and advance in daily increasing virtue.

2. THE WORK OF MARTHA

Let Martha serve, labour and provide good things before God and man, so that her sister Mary may have freer

leisure for divine contemplation. Nor let her murmur against her sister, because she has left her to serve alone; but rather let her exhort her to hold herself in stillness and quietude, and not to occupy herself with any of the things of the world; but always to keep Jesus before her eyes, on Whom angels desire to look. Let her listen to Him, and wonder at the words of grace that proceed out of His mouth, and let her show herself such as to be worthy of listening to divine communications. Let her prepare her heart that it be pure and free from earthly burdens, so that burning with celestial desires, she may be fit, whenever called, to enter with Him into the unknown delights of His joy.

3. THE WORK OF MARY

But Mary must have compassion upon her sister, and often pray to God that she may be able worthily and devoutly to minister to herself and to others the necessities of this life, that she may be patient when things go wrong, and faithful and prudent in all her affairs, and may so manage and arrange outward things that she may by no means neglect herself inwardly, but may, when occasion offers, retire into privacy, after her example (in the Gospel history), to use her leisure for her own good. Nor ought Mary to regard it as a great and happy privilege to live for herself only and for God, while she leaves her sister under her load, but with an eye of kind consideration she should remember her while she is with her Beloved, and should also bring to Martha a word of consolation, so far as it can avail. Remember, Mary, thou couldst not be free to have leisure, unless Martha were willing to work for thee, and unless she arranged outward things thou wouldest not be able so clearly to look into inward things. The solicitude of thy sister is useful to thee, that thy desired silence may not be disturbed. Do not then despise thy sister or judge her to be

less^a holy because she is busied with passing matters and mean affairs ; but rather reflect on this, that in the humility of her service she gives thee the opportunity of contemplation. For she, though she obtains, dispenses, and takes charge of outward things, yet has others in her heart, to which her intention and love are mainly given. For, without doubt, Christ is the end for which she is altogether working, for Whose sake she does not, between morning and evening, shrink away to spare herself, but keeps on so that others may through her care obtain more spiritual fruit. Therefore love thy sister and render her compassion, prayer, reverence and consideration. If she is somewhat less successful in spiritual intercourse, be thou anxious to supplement this by thy holy and devout exercises. But let not these lead thee to be presuming, or to think more of thyself than thou oughtest, but by the grace of God teaching thee inwardly, show 'how thou dost study the duties of charity, because thou oughtest to pass on to her all thy good works, for she has more hindrances to devotion than thou. For she is thy sister, and thou owest to her whatever good thou hast before God.

4. ADMONITION TO MARTHA

Hear thou also again, Martha, who art careful about much serving. Take care that thou do not fret thyself in thy work, and dost not fail under tribulations, for often enough will such occasions beset thee, and a variety of troubles will not be lacking. Blessed art thou if thou receivest all things with patience and thanksgiving, with healthy acknowledgment that prosperity and adversity are alike from God. Thou wilt always need patience, and prudence, that by patience thou mayest overcome evil, and by prudence thou mayest mercifully administer good things to others, though they may be ungrateful.

Remember in what things thou servest, and for what reward thou labourest. Is it not Christ, to Whom thou hast entirely dedicated thyself? Thou art His Martha, and thou must do His bidding, lest thou offend and sin. God is able to bestow on thee more grace and to show thee His glory, that, having diligently and devotedly served Him in this world, thou mayest rest near to Him in His kingdom at the last.

5. CONSOLATION FOR MARTHA

Martha, thy reward will be great in heaven ; only be thou faithful in thy ministry. Therefore serve, take pains, make ready the things necessary for this life, whether in the kitchen or the brewery and cellar, or by pounding seeds, or grinding mustard, or other kinds of grain. If the work is common, yet the reward is life eternal. For whatever thou dost expend for the use of the brethren of Christ, the just Judge will return to thee in the day of judgment. When thou dost lay aside thine own will and convenience, or when thou dost put off spiritual reading to supply the needs of others, then thou art winning from Christ the inheritance of everlasting life, and He is to thee a most precious and firm pledge of repayment in eternal glory. Wherefore He saith to the Father, "Father, I will that where I am, there, also My servant be."¹ O Martha, thou canst carry out many good works, if thou art willing and ready. The bondsmen of Christ need thy service, and without thy care they cannot be free in God. But if thou desirest that thy work should be meritorious, fulfil it out of good-will and not in sadness and weariness. Thou canst show great charity to the brethren, and produce much joy in those who hunger and thirst and have nothing to eat, if thou comest to the aid of their necessities by placing before them the provision that God has bestowed for the infirmities of our bodily nature.

¹ These words appear to be made up of two passages combined.

Attend to what Isaac the Patriarch said to his son Esau. "Take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and that my soul may bless thee." In like manner every one shall bless thee, O Martha, whosoever has been refreshed with meat and drink, in the name of Christ, by thy ministry; nor shall thy blessing be only a temporal reward, but rather the firm assurance of an eternal heritage.

A GENTLE CHIDING OF MARY

In all things show thyself gentle, patient, devout, not anxious about earthly things, but united to God and often occupied in the contemplation of Him. How otherwise wilt thou fulfil the part of Mary if thou dost not keep watchful guard over thyself? Or dost thou not think it a matter for severe judicial censure, to have so much forethought for temporal things, and to pay little attention to spiritual studies. Fear lest thy part be taken away from thee, on account of thine ingratitude, and be given to thy sister as producing good fruit. She that is of this sort does not worthily use the sacred leisure of Mary, but will with just reason be soon expelled from all spiritual enjoyment. But perhaps it will seem wonderful that any blame of Mary can be thought possible, as it is known that she was praised by Christ. It must, however, be realized that many occupy the place of the Saints who in their life are far from the Saints. Many also bear the name of Religion who still remain torpid in secular living. Many are free from occupations out of doors of an official character, who yet do not rest from longing as to external objects. From this weakness of spiritual zeal it arises that many appear to be placed in retirement who yet do not strive to use their leisure for their own profit as is due. Therefore, as has

been said with reference to Mary, those who go on in such ways are convicted of negligence, as being alienated from the fire of divine love and remiss in devoutness. But she that is a true Mary and followeth ever the footsteps of Jesus saith with the bride, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

These few thoughts as to the ministry of Martha and the leisure of Mary, if earnestly and carefully pondered, may open the way to our receiving, after our present labours, the fruit of heavenly blessing and the crown of righteousness.

CHAPTER III

MARTHA

What shall I say more, except to rejoice with thee, if thou hast returned, with grace from heaven, to the things of our weak body? The face of Moses had been made to shine from his converse with the Lord on Mount Sinai. And whence was this, but that the Lord had "brought him into His chambers." How shining and joyful will thy face also appear to us, how calm and sweet thy speech, how beautiful and peace-making thy steps, how circumspect and ordered thy every action, when thou comest to visit the needy and the thirsty, having gone forth from the presence of the Lord, for without a blessing thou canst not leave Him. And it is for thee, undoubtedly, to say to the Lord, before thou goest forth and descendest from the mount to our Egyptian darkness, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." For us indeed this blessing avails, but it is for thee chiefly. The more ready thou art to supply what we need, the more closely thou leadest us to the divine mysteries. The more devoted and affable thou dost appear to us, the more acceptable will be the trouble thou dost

take for our human needs. And when we find thee to be such an one we shall be unable to do otherwise than congratulate thee, being astonished and saying, "Whence this abundant joy of mind and body? Has not the Lord been with thee to-day, and we knew it not until now?" Blessed art thou, and blessed are all who serve Him, and who forsake Him not, till they render up to Him their souls, often giving their lives for their brethren. What wilt thou offer in reply as regards all these benefits, but humble and devout responses of head and heart, saying: "Why do ye gaze on me, or what do you admire in me, an earthen vessel, a dry pitcher, a frail reed? And that the glory of my Lord Jesus Christ may be shown forth, know that it is not for my merits that the Lord has sent me to you, but that I might become a sharer of your good works. Beloved, I say unto you, 'the King has brought me into His chambers.' Thence is all that ye behold."

Therefore I beg you, my beloved ones, together with me to give thanks for His unspeakable gift. Let us also sedulously pray for His loving favour, that while we remain together here, He would vouchsafe to revive us with the consolations of His spiritual grace; and at last to lead us through into His eternal mansions, where all the hearts of the chosen ones are filled with the sweetest peace and beat with the utmost joy. Gather from what has been said what a pious duty it is to serve the brethren; how pleasing it is to God, and almost equal to the service of Angels, who "are said to be ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Learn also how much greater is the virtue that is tested by action, and thus rendered clearer and truer, than that which depends only on thought and imagination. O! what great confidence is given to the faithful servant, now in this present time, and how much greater shall be given in the trial of the judgment hour, by the word of the Lord, "Well done,"

good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful in a few things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." The gracious Lord, Who is ever the rewarder of those who attend on Him, will not deny thee the hidden secret of His sweetness, because thou hast delivered thyself up to Him, to be active in outward and servile works.

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